Join XAAM Prelims 2019 Online TestSeries 200 Tests @ Rs1999

http://imojo.in/Online_TestSeries

Prelims Bits 01-07-2018
Mumbai UNESCO Status

- Mumbai's Art Deco buildings and Victorian Gothic Architectures were added to UNESCO's World Heritage List.
- This makes Mumbai city the second city in India after Ahmedabad to be inscribed on the World Heritage List.
- This is the third such honour for the metropolis after the Elephanta Caves and the majestic Victoria Terminus rechristened Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus railway station which earned the coveted tag in 1987 and 2004 respectively.
- There are more than 200 Art Deco buildings in Mumbai, majority of them, built between the early 1930s and early 1950s.
- Such buildings are clustered together in the south of the coastal city along the marine drive area.
- These are sleeker buildings boasting curved corners, balconies, vertical lines and exotic motifs.
- They were built by wealthy Indians who sent their architects to Europe to come up with modern designs different to those of their colonial rulers.

Victorian Gothic Structures

- These are predecessors of Art deco structures built by the British empire
- These public buildings include the Old Secretariat (1857-74), University Library and Convention Hall (1874-78), the Bombay High Court (1878), the Public Works Department Office (1872), Watson’s Hotel (1869), David Sasoon Library (1870), the Elphinstone College (1888), etc.

Air pollution and Diabetes

- According to recent research outdoor air pollution even at levels deemed safe may be associated with an increased risk of diabetes globally.
- Air pollution contributes to development of diabetes by reducing insulin production and triggering inflammation, which prevents the body from converting blood glucose into energy that the body needs.
- The overall risk of pollution-related diabetes is tilted more toward lower-income countries such as India that lack the resources for environmental mitigation systems and clean-air policies.

**Diabetes**

- **Diabetes mellitus (DM)** - Commonly referred to as diabetes, is a group of metabolic disorders in which there are high blood sugar levels over a prolonged period.
- Most common types of Diabetes Mellitus are as follows
  1. **Type 2 diabetes** - A chronic condition that affects the way the body processes blood sugar (glucose).
  2. **Type 1 diabetes** - A chronic condition in which the pancreas produces little or no insulin.
  3. **Prediabetes** - A condition in which blood sugar is high, but not high enough to be type 2 diabetes.
  4. **Gestational diabetes** - A form of high blood sugar affecting pregnant women.
- **Diabetes insipidus** - It occurs when the body can't regulate how it handles fluids.
- The condition is caused by a hormonal abnormality and isn't related to diabetes.
- In addition to extreme thirst and heavy urination, other symptoms may include getting up at night to urinate, or bed-wetting.
- Depending on the form of the disorder, treatments might include hormone therapy, a low-salt diet and drinking more water.

**National Statistics Day**

- National Statistics Day is celebrated on 29th June every year in recognition of the notable contributions made by Late Professor Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis.
- Mahalanobis has made his excellence in the fields of statistics, statistical system and economic planning.
• The objective of celebration of this Day is to create public awareness about the importance of statistics in socio-economic planning and policy formulation

Source: PIB, Business Standard, Economic Times

02-07-2018

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)

• OPCW is an independent, autonomous international organisation with a working relationship with the United Nations.
• It is the implementing body of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), which entered into force in 1997.
• OPCW has 193 Member States working together to achieve a world free of chemical weapons.
• It is headquartered in The Hague, Netherlands.
• It was awarded Nobel Peace Prize in 2013.
• It has been recently granted additional powers by its members voting in two-third majority.
• Until now, OPCW could only say whether chemical weapons were used but not who had used them.
• The new power allows it to assign blame for attacks.
• This process of extending its jurisdiction was heavily opposed by Russia.
• But, Britain was supporting the move arguing that new powers were needed to deal with repeated chemical attacks in Syria.

RIMPAC

• RIMPAC (Rim of the Pacific Exercise) is the world’s largest international maritime exercise.
• The 26th edition of RIMPAC was hosted by the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM) recently.
• It commenced off the Hawaii coast with the participation from 25 countries.
• It is aimed at increased inter-operability and development of common understanding of procedures for maritime security operations.
• It provides a platform for multilateral operational interactions.
• India has participated in this edition and represented by INS Sahyadri.
• Israel, Sri Lanka and Vietnam joined RIMPAC for the first time.
• China is absent this year as it was dis-invited from participating by the U.S., citing China’s military actions in the South China Sea.
• China participated in the exercise in 2014 and 2016.

**INS Sahyadri**

• INS Sahyadri is an indigenously built stealth frigate.
• It participated in trilateral Malabar war games with Japan and the U.S. off the Coast of Guam.
• It recently participated in RIMPAC and has been adjudged runner-up in an innovation competition.
• INS Sahyadri presented the ‘idea of integrating yoga into our daily life as technology for well-being during extended deployments for ships’.
• The idea was appreciated by representatives of participating countries.

**Mission Shaurya**

• ‘Mission Shaurya’ is an initiative of the Tribal department of the Maharashtra State Government.
• It aims to train tribal students to scale Mt. Everest.
• Recently, 10 tribal students from residential schools in Chandrapur district of Maharashtra conquered Everest.
• **Mission Shakti** - Maharashtra government has also announced this mission to impart special training and prepare tribal students for the Olympics 2024.

**International Organisation for Migration (IOM)**

• IOM was established in 1951. It had been an observer to the UN since 1992.
The agency joined the UN system as a related organization in September 2016.

- It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- It works in the field of migration with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners.
- The organisation has 166 member countries (including India) and 8 observer states.
- It aims to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people.
- IOM works to help ensure the humane management of migration by providing services and advice to governments and migrants, promote international cooperation on migration issues.
- Mr. Vitorino of Portugal is the first Director General elected to IOM after it has become part of UN.

**AGNI – V**

- The Agni series (I to V) missiles constitute the backbone of India’s nuclear weapons delivery and part of nuclear triad.
- Agni-V is India’s longest-range ballistic missile which will be inducted into the nuclear arsenal soon.
- Earlier variants of the Agni family of long-range missiles have already been deployed.
- Agni – V is an Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) with a range of over 5,000 km and can reach most parts of China.
- It is powered by three stage solid fuelled missiles.
- It can carry a payload of 1.5 tonnes.
- It is a part of Integrated Guided Missile Development Program (IGMDP).
No-first-use doctrine

- India is committed to a ‘No-First-Use’ policy as part of its nuclear doctrine.
- Thus, second strike capability - the capability to strike back after being hit by nuclear weapons first becomes important.

Source: The Hindu, Indian Express

03-07-2018

Hubble Space Telescope

- NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope has recently detected a massive globular cluster that orbits the Milky Way galaxy.
- The globular cluster is a huge gravitationally bound collection of stars believed to be 10 billion years old.
- They are denser and more spherical than open star clusters and typically contain stars which are thought to have formed at roughly the same time.
- Hubble space Telescope is the world's first large, space-based optical telescope, named in honor of astronomer Edwin Hubble.
- The Hubble is a joint project between NASA and the European Space Agency.
- Sun is the energy source of this space-based telescope.
- Hubble Telescope has tracked the Neptune’s Mysterious Shrinking Storm.
- Some of the interesting Hubble Discoveries are
  1. Creating a 3-D map of mysterious dark matter.
  2. Discovering Nix and Hydra, two moons of Pluto.
  3. Helping determine the rate of the universe's expansion.
  4. Discovering that nearly every major galaxy is anchored by a black hole.
  5. Helping refine the age of the universe.

**Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia (RIMES)**

- It is an intergovernmental institution for the generation and application of early warning information.
- It was established in 2009, evolved from the efforts of countries in Africa and Asia, in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.
- It works with a multi-hazard framework for the generation and communication of early warning information and capacity building for preparedness and response to trans-boundary hazards.
- It operates from its regional early warning center in Thailand.
- The **State government of Odisha** has recently entered into a collaboration with RIMES.
• It is to enhance early warning system for effective management of all kinds of disasters like flood, drought, heat wave, lightning and road accidents.

2021 Census

• The Registrar General of India (RGI) recently notified the amended census rules.
• The RGI issued the notification as the process for the 2021 Census kicks in.
• According to the notification, the data collected during the 2021 Census will be stored electronically.
• This is the first time to store date electronically since the decennial exercise was conducted in 1951 in Independent India.
• Any tampering with the data will invite punishment under the Information Technology Act, 2000.

Asia Pacific Trade Agreement

• The Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA) was signed in 1975 as an initiative of UN- Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).
• It is previously named the Bangkok Agreement.
• There are 6-member states to APTA – Bangladesh, China, India, South Korea, Laos and Sri Lanka.
• Mongolia is soon to become the 7th member of APTA. It has concluded bilateral negotiation on tariff concessions with members of APTA.
• It is a preferential trade agreement (PTA), under which the basket of items as well as extent of tariff concessions are enlarged during the trade negotiating rounds.
• It is a truly region-wide trade agreement spanning East and South Asia, with potential to expand to other sub-regions, including Central Asia and the Pacific.
• APTA is the only operational trade agreement linking China and India.
• It is open to all developing member countries.
• It is the first plurilateral agreement among the developing countries in the region and has the longest effective implementation period amongst the trade agreements in the entire Asia-Pacific.
• Recently, India has agreed to provide tariff concessions on 3,142 products to APTA members from July 1.

Golden Globe Race

• It is being conducted to commemorate 50 years since the world’s first solo non-stop circumnavigation undertaken by Sir Robin Knox Johnston of UK in 1968.
• In this race, all the 18 participants are required to sail around the world, single-handed and non-stop.
• It commences from Les Sables d’Olonne harbour in France from June 2018 and expected to complete in April 2019.
• The uniqueness of the race is that boat designs and technology newer than 1968 is not permitted, hence use of GPS, satellite communication, navigational aids, etc is forbidden.
• Commander Abhilash Tomy of the Indian Navy is the only invitee from Asia to participate in the Golden Globe Race.
• He will sail the boat 'Thuriya', an indigenously built sailing vessel.
• He has already covered 53,000 nautical miles under sail, including a solo non-stop circumnavigation of the globe in 2012-13 onboard Indian Naval Sailing Vessel (INSV) Mhadei.

Source: The Hindu, PIB

04-07-2018

Repatriation of Bru refugees

• The Centre and the state governments of Tripura and Mizoram has recently signed an agreement for repatriation of Bru community from Tripura to Mizoram.
The central government will provide financial assistance for rehabilitation of Bru community members in Mizoram.

The Bru militancy was a reactionary movement against Mizo nationalist groups.

Mizo nationalists had demanded in the mid-1990s that the Brus be left out of the state's electoral rolls, contending that the tribe was not indigenous to Mizoram.

In 1997, the murder of a Mizo forest guard at the Dampa Tiger Reserve in Mizoram allegedly by Bru militants led to a violent backlash against the community.

It forced several thousand people belonging to Bru community to flee to neighbouring Tripura.

The displaced Bru people from Mizoram have been living in various camps in Tripura since 1997.

**MOVE: Global Mobility Summit**

India’s **first ever mobility summit** will be organised by NITI Aayog, in collaboration with various ministries and industry partners.

It will be held in New Delhi in the month of September, 2018.

The summit will give impetus for vehicle electrification, renewable energy integration, job growth and speed up India’s transition to a clean energy economy.

It will see participation from major global players offering first-hand perspective on automotive solutions, upcoming trends in the logistics sector.

The conclave would include panel discussions featuring global CEOs and transport ministers from across the world.

It will see participation from countries like Netherlands, Slovakia, USA, UK, Netherlands, China, South Korea, Australia etc.

NITI Aayog has also been working towards evolving a National Strategy for Transforming Mobility.

**Behdienkhlam**

It is Meghalaya’s annual cultural festival.
• It is celebrated in the month of July all over the Jaintia hills for good health, property and bumper harvest.
• The main spectacle happens at the small peripheral town of Jowai, 64 km away from Shillong, Meghalaya.
• The non-Christian ‘Pnar’ people who believe either in the traditional faith of ‘Niamtre’ or Hinduism observe this festival.

**cVIGIL**

• cVIGIL is a mobile app launched by Election Commission of India.
• It enables citizens to report on violation of code of conduct during elections.
• The application will be active only in States where elections have been announced.
• The moment a citizen exits an election-bound State, the app will become inactive.
• To prevent any misuse, the app will not allow uploading of the pre-recorded or old images and videos.
• The app will be made available for general use by all, from the forthcoming Assembly elections in the States of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram and Rajasthan.

**Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) 2018**

• The conference is to be held in **Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia** in the month of July.
• Theme of the AMCDRR 2018 is ‘Preventing Disaster Risk: Protecting Sustainable Development’.
• It will enable governments and stakeholders to review progress made against the commitments at the AMCDRR 2016, i.e. the New Delhi Declaration, the Asia Regional Plan.
• It will provide a unique forum for those countries and cities that have not yet developed and/or updated their Disaster Risk Reduction strategies under the Sendai framework.
• India will participate in this conference and also organize a side event on Cultural Heritage and Disaster Risk Management.

**Koala bear**

• Recently, an international team of scientists has successfully sequenced the whole genome of Koala bear.
• It is a tree-dwelling marsupial of coastal eastern Australia.
• They have exceptional parental care and strange eating habits that they enjoy the leaves of eucalyptus that would be toxic or even fatal to most mammals.
• They are born after just 34-36 days of gestation without an immune system and spend almost six months developing in the pouch.
• It is listed as “Vulnerable” under IUCN’s Red Data Book.

**Source: PIB, The Hindu**

05-07-2018

**Accession to WIPO treaty**

• Union Cabinet has approved the proposal regarding accession to the WIPO Copyright Treaty and WIPO Performers and Phonograms Treaty.
• The treaty extends coverage of copyright to the internet and digital environment.
• It is seen as a step towards the objective laid in the National Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Policy, 2016.
• The policy aims to get value for IPRs through commercialization by providing guidance and support to IPR owners about commercial opportunities of e-commerce through Internet and mobile platforms.

**WIPO Copyright Treaty**
• The treaty came to force in 2002 and has been adopted by 96 contracting parties till date.
• It is a Special agreement under **Berne Convention** (for protection of literary and artistic works).
• It has provisions to extend the protection of copyrights contained therein to the digital environment.

**WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty**

• The treaty came to force in 2002 and has 96 contracting parties as its members.
• WPPT deals with rights of Performers (actors, singers, musicians etc.) and producers of Phonograms (sound recordings) in digital environment.
• It recognizes moral rights of the performers for the first time & provides exclusive economic rights to them in digital environment.

**Regional Rural Banks (RRB)**

• RRBs were set up with the objective to provide credit to the small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, artisans and small entrepreneurs in rural areas for development of productive activities.
• RRBs are jointly owned by Government of India, the concerned State Government and Sponsor Banks with the issued capital in the ratio of 50:15:35 respectively.
• Union cabinet has recently approved the extension of the scheme of recapitalization of RRBs for the next 3 years upto 2019-20.
• This will enable the RRBs to maintain the minimum prescribed Capital to Risk Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) of 9 per cent.
• The scheme of Recapitalization of RRBs started in FY 2010-11 and was extended twice in the year 2012-13 and 2015-16.

**National Commission for Safai Karmacharis**

• The National Commission for Safai Karamcharis (NCSK) was constituted in 1994 as a statutory body by “National Commission for Safai Karamcharis Act, 1993”.
• But with the lapse of the act in 2004, the commission is acting as a **Non-Statutory body** of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
• Its tenure is extended from time to time through government resolutions.
• The latest resolution in 2016 extended its tenure to 2019.
• With the enactment of “The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act, 2013”, the mandate and scope of the commission has also been enlarged.
• The commission will monitor the implementation of the act and take **suo-moto notice** of matter relating to non-implementation of the Act.
• The commission will also advice central and state government for effective implementation.
• Union Cabinet has recently approved the creation of one post each of Vice-Chairperson and Member in the commission to fulfil desired objectives of welfare and development of Safai Karamcharis.

**Khan Prahari**

• It is a **mobile application** is launched by Ministry of Coal for tracking illegal mining.
• It is a tool for reporting any activity taking place related to illegal coal mining like rat hole mining, pilferage etc.
• Citizens can upload geo-tagged photographs of the incident along with textual information directly to the system.

**Coal Mine Surveillance & Management System (CMSMS)**

• The CMSMS is a **web based GIS application** through which location of sites for unauthorised mining can be detected.
• Its basic objective is reporting, monitoring and taking suitable action on unauthorised coal mining activities.
• The basic platform used in the system is of Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology’s map which provides village level information.
• The system will use satellite data to detect changes by which unauthorised mining activity extending beyond the allotted lease area can be detected and suitable action can be taken on it.
• It is developed by a subsidiary of Coal India Limited (CIL) and Bhaskarcharya Institute of Space Application and Geo-informatics (BISAG).

Under Water Museum

• Bolivia is going to build an underwater museum in its sacred Lake Titicaca.
• It is in partnership with Belgium and UNESCO would contribute $2 million to the project.
• Titicaca is located between the border of Bolivia and Peru with an area of 8,500 sq.km.
• It will be both a tourist complex and a centre for archaeological geological and biological research which will make it the only one in the world.

Source: The Hindu, PIB

06-07-2018

Higher Education Financing Agency (HEFA)

• HEFA was formed as a non-banking financial company to give a major push for creation of high quality infrastructure in premier educational institutions.
• It was registered as a Section 8 Company under the Companies Act.
• It was set up as a joint venture between the HRD ministry and Canara bank.
Union Cabinet has recently permitted HEFA to mobilise Rs. 1 lakh crore to fund research and academic infrastructure in higher educational institutions by 2022.

- It will rise funds from the market and mobilize CSR funds from PSUs/Corporates.
- It will also have equity share from Central government (Rs. 5000 crore) and Canara Bank.
- The funding will also be available to government-run schools KendriyaVidyalayas and Jawahar NavodayaVidyalayas.
- **Funding** - HEFA will directly release the sanctioned amount to vendors or contractors only after the certification of executing agency and educational institutions.
- All the Centrally Funded Institutions will have to repay the borrowed amount (loans) in a time frame of over 10 years.

**Revitalising Infrastructure and Systems in Education (RISE) Scheme**

- RISE scheme was announced in 2018 budget to revitalize the infrastructure of higher educational institutions with a total investment of one lakh crore in the upcoming 4 years.
- It will be financed via a restructured HEFA.
- This scheme will cover all centrally-funded institutes (CFIs) including central universities, IITs, IIMs, NITs and IISERs.
- These institutions can borrow a sum of Rs. 1,00,000 crore in next 4 years.
- Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) will get largest part of loans on offer under RISE Scheme.

**Crew Escape System**

- Crew Escape System is an emergency escape measure to quickly pull the astronaut crew out to a safe distance from launch vehicle during a launch abort.
- To demonstrate this system, ISRO recently successfully carried a test named “Pad Abort Test (PAT)”. 
PAT is the first in a series of tests to qualify a crew escape system technology of a manned mission in the future.

PAT is viewed as a major technology demonstrator and to ascertain the trustworthiness and efficiency of the crew escape system.

The U.S, Russia and China have their own crew escape system in place.

It is a small step closer to ISRO’s ambition of sending Indians to space.

First BS-VI engine certificate

- International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT) releases first Bharat Stage -VI engine certificate for a heavy-duty engine model.
- It is much ahead of the implementation date of 1st April 2020 for rolling out of Bharat Stage-VI norms in the country.
- Thus, it gives sufficient time for product stabilization in terms of making it more robust and cost competitive for the end consumers.
- ICAT is the first of new world class centers established under the National Automotive Testing and R&D Infrastructure Project (NATRiP).
- It is under the administrative control of Ministry of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises.
- Its main objective is to carry out Research & Development in the field of Automotive Engineering.

Bharat Stage Emission Standards

- They are emission standards instituted by the Government of India in the year 2000, based on EU standards.
- It is to regulate the output of air pollutants from internal combustion engines and Spark-ignition engines equipment, including motor vehicles.
- The standards and the timeline for implementation are set by the Central Pollution Control Board under the Ministry of Environment & Forests and climate change.
- All new vehicles manufactured after the implementation of BS norms must be compliant with the regulations.
• Major emissions governed under these norms are carbonmonoxide emissions, hydrocarbon emission limits. Nitrogen Oxides and particulate matter are also significant metrics.
• BS-IV standard was brought into place in country-wide in April 2017.
• Implementation of the BS V standard that was earlier scheduled for 2019 has now been skipped.
• In 2016, the Indian government announced that the country would skip the BS-V norms altogether and adoptBS-VI norms by 2020.
• By moving to BS-VI, the country will be using the highest specifications of fuel standard available in the worldright now.

Tejas

• It is an indigenous fighter aircraft inducted in to Indian Airforce in the year 2016.
• It has recently commenced its operation.
• It is designed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
• It is a single-seat, single-jet engine, multirole light fighter.
• It is the smallest and lightest multi-role supersonic fighter aircraft in its class.
• It can fire Air to Air Missiles, carry bombs and Precision Guided ammunition.
• It has its root in the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) programme, which began in the 1980s to replace the ageing MiG-21 fighters.
• MiG-21 fighters are purchased from Russia in 1961.

Source: The Hindu, PIB
07-07-2018

NASA Solar Probe
• NASA plans to send its first robotic spacecraft “Parker Solar Probe” to the Sun.
• It will travel directly into the sun’s atmosphere about 4 million miles from the star’s surface.
• The mission is to study why the surface of the Sun, called the photosphere, is not as hot as its atmosphere, called the corona.
• The surface temperature of the Sun is only about 5,500°C but the atmosphere above it is an over two million degrees Celsius.
• The mission may also ascertain why the Sun occasionally emits high-energy particles that are a danger to unprotected astronauts and spacecraft.
• **Recent Development** - NASA’s Parker Solar Probe has recently got its revolutionary **heat shield** permanently attached to the spacecraft.
• The shield is made of superheated carbon composite material sprayed with a specifically formulated white coating on the sun facing side to reflect the sun’s energy away from the spacecraft.
• As the spacecraft approach the sun, temperatures on the heat shield will reach nearly 1,300°C but the spacecraft will be kept at about 30°C.
• The shield will help the spacecraft remain safe as it collects data about the inner workings of the corona.

**Temperature in the Sun’s Atmosphere**

• The sun’s atmosphere corona is much hotter than its visible surface Photosphere.
• Normally, the layer closest to a source of heat, the Sun’s surface, in this case, would have a higher temperature than the more distant atmosphere.
• But the reason for the high temperature is the constant eruption of tiny solar flares in the solar atmosphere.
• The solar flares produce hard X-rays, whose wavelengths are much shorter than the light humans can see and it is a signature of extremely hot solar material.

**Mudumalai Tiger Reserve**
Mudumalai Tiger Reserve is a critical part of the Nilgiris Biosphere Reserve.

The reserve, comprising the wildlife sanctuary and the national park, was declared a core tiger habitat in 2007.

It extends over a core area of 321 sq.km and buffer area of 367 sq.km.

Union Ministry of Environment has recently issued notification declaring 438 sq.km of area around the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve as an ecosensitive zone.

The notification followed a Supreme Court order calling for an eco-sensitive zone around all national parks.

The declaration of an eco-sensitive zone would place restrictions on polluting industries but it would not stop agriculture activities in the area.

The following activities are restricted/prohibited in the eco-sensitive zone,

1. Commercial mining,
2. Setting up of industries causing pollution,
3. Establishment of major hydroelectric projects,
4. Use or production or processing of any hazardous substances,
5. Discharge of untreated effluents into natural water bodies or land area and
6. Setting up of new saw mills or brick kilns.

But resorts already present in the area would not be forced to stop functioning.

**Gaming University**

- The UNESCO, specialised agency of United Nations, entered into an agreement with the Andhra Pradesh Economic Development Board for the establishment of a gaming digital learning hub.
- Visakhapatnam will soon have a Design university for gaming.
- The hub is seen as potential medium for creating around 50,000 jobs in 10 years.

**Common Service Centre**
The Common Service Center (CSC) Scheme is an integral part of “Digital India” initiative of Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

CSCs are the access points for delivery of various electronic services to villages.

In addition to it, CSCs promote rural entrepreneurship, community participation and collective action for social change.

CSC e-Governance Services India Limited is a Special Purpose Vehicle (CSC SPV) incorporated under the Companies Act, 1956 to monitor the implementation of the Common Services Centers Scheme.

Village Level Entrepreneur (VLE) under CSCs provide service to the rural consumer in villages.

Recent development – CSC SPV has entered into agreement with HDFC Bank.

This is to enable its three lakh Village Level Entrepreneurs (VLEs) managing the Common Services Centers operate as Banking Correspondents of HDFC Bank.

They will support the Government initiative to promote financial inclusion and make banking services more accessible in rural areas.

HDFC Bank will support CSC SPV in converting 1000 identified villages into Digital Villages within this financial year.

Stree Swabhiman

Stree Swabhiman is an initiative under Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology for promoting women’s menstrual health and hygiene.

Under this initiative, CSC SPV will provide access to affordable, reliable and modern (eco-friendly) sanitary napkins to adolescent girls and women in rural areas.

Under this initiative, semi-automatic and manual sanitary napkin manufacturing units will be set up at CSC for producing sanitary napkins.

HDFC Bank will also support CSC SPV by funding Stree Swabhiman Sanitary Napkin Manufacturing Units.
Adopt a Heritage Project

- It is a key initiative of Ministry of Tourism in close collaboration with Ministry of Culture and Archeological Survey of India (ASI).
- It aims to encourage public / private sector companies and corporate citizens / NGOs / individuals to take up the responsibility of development, operation and maintenance of State heritage and other important tourist sites in India.
- They will be considered as “Monument Mitras” for the development of tourist amenities.
- In April this year, Dalmia Bharat Group won a bid to take over the maintenance of 'Red Fort', after it signed a memorandum with the Government of India.
- Recently, one of the heritage site in Delhi has got a monument mitra for its development.

Source: The Hindu, PIB

08-07-2018

National Testing Agency

- The Union Cabinet had approved setting up of NTA to conduct entrance examinations such as NET,NEET,JEE (Mains) for higher educational institutions.
- The NTA would also conduct National Eligibility cum Entrance Test Common Management Admission Test (CMAT) and Graduate Pharmacy Aptitude Test(GPAT).
- So far, The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) conducted NEET on behalf of the Medical Council Of India and the Health Ministry and NET on behalf of the University Grants Commission (UGC).
- The NTA would work as an autonomous and self-sustained premier testing organisation to conduct entrance examinations for higher educational institutions.
- It will be chaired by an educationist appointed by Human Resource Development Ministry

**DigiLocker**

- Ministry of Railways approves digital Aadhaar and Driving Licence from Digital Locker as proof of identity of passengers for undertaking journey by Train.
- The documents are accepted only if a passenger shows the Aadhaar/Driving Licence from the ‘Issued Documents’ section by logging into his/her DigiLocker account.
- However, the documents uploaded by the user himself/herself (i.e. the documents in ‘Uploaded Documents’ section will not be considered as a valid proof of identity.
- DigiLocker is a secure cloud based platform for storage, sharing and verification of documents & certificates launched by Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

**International Round Table Conference**

- The Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation (MoSPI) is organising a two-day International Round Table Conference “Data for New India” at New Delhi during 9-10th July, 2018.
- The objective of the Round Table Conference is to identify innovative ideas for improving the statistical system in India, taking cue from the best practices followed in advanced countries like Canada, UK and Australia.
- Such a Conference is being organized in India for the first time, the conference is expected to suggest measures paving way for initiating the reform process in the Indian Statistical System.

**Cellular Jail**

- The Vice President of India as visited the infamous Cellular Jail in Port Blair, Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- Valiant freedom fighters were confined solitarily and meted out most inhuman treatment by the British in the cellular jail.
The purpose of solitary confinement was to demoralise freedom fighters, keep them in small, solitary cells without any scope to interact with fellow prisoners and local people.

**INS Trikand**

- India's latest frontline warship INS Trikand has reached Sri Lanka in a goodwill visit.
- INS Trikand is a state-of-the-art warship of the Indian Navy equipped with a versatile range of weapons and sensors capable.
- It can address threats in all three dimensions - air, surface and sub-surface.

Source: PIB, Business Standard, Economic Times

**09-07-2018**

**Kepler Telescope**

- NASA has recently revealed that the Kepler Space Telescope is almost out of fuel and decided it to put the spacecraft in a hibernation-like state.
- The Kepler telescope was originally launched in 2009 as part of NASA’s Discovery Program.
- It is an observatory in space dedicated to finding planets outside our solar system.
- It targets particularly alien planets that are around the same size as Earth in the “habitable” regions of their parent star.
- Since 2009, it has discovered extra-solar planets in the range between the size of Earth and Neptune.
- Most of these planets were discovered in a small region of the constellation Cygnus.
- Kepler was the first telescope to find a planet (Kepler-69c) approximately the size of Earth in the habitable region of a star.
- It examined the TRAPPIST-1 system which likely has multiple Earth-sized planets in it between December 2016 and March 2017.
- It was approved far beyond its original mission length and was operating well until May 2013, when a second of its four reaction wheels or gyroscopes failed.

**TESS**

- Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) is a new exoplanet hunting spacecraft.
- While Kepler is nearing its mission lifetime, TESS is readying to take its place.
- It was launched in 2018 to detect small planets with bright host stars in the solar neighbourhood.
- The spacecraft will be looking for a phenomenon known as a transit, where a planet passes in front of its star, causing a periodic and regular dip in the star’s brightness.
- It will do an all-sky survey from an orbit between the Earth and the moon.

**Legal Entity for Animal Kingdom**

- The Uttarakhand High Court has declared the entire animal kingdom, including birds and aquatic animals, as a legal entity having rights of a “living person”.
- The court has invoked Article 21 of the Constitution - safeguarding the rights of humans, protects life. The court has clarified that the word ‘life’ includes animal world.
- According to the judgement, Legal Entity means “The entity acts like a natural person but only through a designated person, whose acts are processed within the ambit of law”.
- This means the animal kingdom could be represented by a custodian.
- It declared all citizens of Uttarakhand “persons in loco parentis” (in the place of a parent) giving them the responsibility to protect animals and ensure their welfare.
The high court, last year accorded the status of “living entity” to the Ganga and Yamuna rivers, a decision subsequently stayed by the Supreme Court.

**World Sanskrit Conference**

- World Sanskrit Conference is to promote, preserve and practice the Sanskrit language all over the world by the people.
- It is being held in various countries across the globe once in every three years and so far it has been held thrice in India.
- The latest edition, 17th World Sanskrit Conference is going to be held at Vancouver, Canada.
- Union HRD minister will be inaugurating the conference.
- More than 500 scholars and delegates from over 40 countries will be participating in this conference on various subjects.

**Formalin**

- Fish Samples in Chennai have shown the presence of Formalin.
- This is the first time, samples of fish in Tamil Nadu have tested positive for formalin.
- Formalin, a derivative of formaldehyde is a carcinogenic substance used to prolong the shelf life of fish.
- It is harmful when consumed by humans.
- Once ingested, formalin releases toxins into the body, and the sustained ingestion of formalin can eventually lead to cancer.
- A solution which contains 37% formalin has the capacity to kill a fully grown adult.
- Other chemicals added - Sodium benzoate was a preservative that was mixed when the ice was formed and Ammonia is also added to the ice, but it is done to prevent the ice from melting.

**Mattala Airport**

- Mattala Airport is referred to as the world’s “emptiest airport” located in Sri Lanka.
- India is negotiating a joint venture with Sri Lanka to operate this loss making airport.
- It is located strategically very near to Hambantota port which is operated by China.

Source: The Hindu, PIB, Financial Express.
‘India Tourism Mart’

- The ‘first ever’ India Tourism Mart (ITM) will be organised by Tourism Ministry in partnership with the Federation of Associations in Indian Tourism and Hospitality (FAITH) and with the support of State /UT Governments.
- The objective of the event is to create an annual Global Tourism Mart for India in line with major international travel marts being held in countries across the world.
- It will provide a platform for all stakeholders in the tourism and hospitality industries to interact and transact business opportunities.
- It will include pavilion for States & Union Territories to showcase their unique tourism destinations and products.

Institutions of Eminence

- The Government has shortlisted Six Institutions of Eminence (IoEs) including 3 from Public Sector and 3 from Private Sector.
- **Public Sector** - Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, IIT Bombay and IIT, Delhi.
- **Private Sector** - Jio Institute (Reliance Foundation), Pune, Birla Institute of Technology & Sciences, Pilani, Rajasthan; and Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, Karnataka.
- These institutes were selected based on the recommendations of Empowered committee set up for this purpose.
- These institutions will get financial assistance up to Rs. 1000 Crore over the period of five years under this scheme.
- **Other Benefits** - These Institutions shall be provided with greater autonomy
  1. to admit foreign students up to 30% of admitted students;
  2. to recruit foreign faculty upto 25% of faculty strength;
  3. to offer online courses upto 20% of its programmes;
4. to enter into academic collaboration with top 500 in the world ranking Institutions without permission of UGC;
5. free to fix and charge fees from foreign students without restriction;
6. flexibility of course structure in terms of number of credit hours and years to take a degree;
7. complete flexibility in fixing of curriculum and syllabus, among others.
   • These institutions are expected to make into top 500 world rankings in a decade.

**India Smart Cities Fellowship Program**

- Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) will engage 30 young graduates/post graduates and PhDs from the selected fields as Smart Cities Fellows.
- The fields are Urban Planning, Urban Design, Engineering, Information and Technology, Urban Mobility, Finance, Social Sector, and Environmental issues.
- They engage with office of mission director, Smart Cities and CEOs of selected Smart Cities for the period of 1-year extendable upto 3 years.
- It is designed to provide valuable experience to the youth interested in smart cities specifically, and urban renewal sector in general.

**India Smart Cities Internship (ISCI) Program**

- MoHUA will engage students pursuing Under Graduate/Graduate/Post Graduate degree as Interns to help implementation of Smart City Projects in various States/Cities.
- The internship will be on unpaid basis for a period of 6 to 12 weeks.
- It is designed to give them exposure in the areas of development under Smart cities Mission.
- The areas include Urban Planning, Urban Design, Engineering, Information and Technology, Urban Mobility, Finance, Social Sector, and Environmental issues.
- They will be given an Experience Certificate at the end successful completion of the program.
National Green Tribunal

- Justice Adarsh Kumar Goel recently assumed charge as chairperson of the NGT.
- Justice Goel, who retired as a Supreme Court judge on July 6, has been appointed for five years.
- He is the third chairperson of the NGT since its inception in 2010.
- NGT was established in 2010 under NGT Act with its principal bench in Delhi.
- Its objective is to provide an effective and speedy disposal of cases pertaining to environment protection, conservation of forests and for seeking compensation for damages caused to people or property due to violation of environmental laws.
- The NGT has the power to hear all civil cases relating to environmental issues that are linked to the following laws -
  1. The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974;
  2. The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980;
  3. The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981;
  4. The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986;
  5. The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991;
- There is a bar on civil court to take cases under these listed laws in Schedule 1 of NGT act.
- The NGT has not been vested with powers to hear any matter relating to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and various laws enacted by States relating to forests, tree preservation etc.
- The NGT is not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice.

Asian Development Bank

- Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved $503-million for lining project of the Son canal in Shahabad-Bhojpur region of Bihar.
- The project would benefit the agriculture sector immensely in the region.
• ADB now has 67 members of which 48 from within Asia and Pacific while remaining 19 from outside.
• It is headquartered at Manila, Philippines.
• The bank admits the members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and non-regional developed countries.
• ADB assists its members, and partners, by providing loans, technical assistance, grants, and equity investments to promote social and economic development.
• **Other Projects implemented by ADB** - East coast economic corridor, solar rooftop investment program, Mechi river bridge project in Indo-Nepal border, TAPI gas pipeline, South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) Program, supporting fiscal reforms in West Bengal State.

**World's largest mobile manufacturing plant**

• South Korea in partnership with India recently inaugurated Samsung’s mobile manufacturing plant, touted as the biggest in the world, in **Noida**.
• It will almost double its manufacturing capacity to 120 million by 2020 from 68 million now.

**Source: The Hindu, PIB**

11-07-2018

**MoU by the Vice President**

• Vice President, Shri M. Venkaiah Naidu becomes first Chairman of Rajya Sabha to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a foreign country.
• Rajya Sabha has, for the first time in 76 years since it came into being, entered a MOU with a foreign counterpart for promoting inter-parliamentary dialogue.
• The MoU was inked with the visiting President of the Senate of the Republic of Rwanda
• It covers the following articles of cooperation -
  1. To promote Inter-Parliamentary dialogue,
  2. Capacity building of parliamentary staff,
  3. Organisation of conferences, forums, seminars, staff attachment programmes, workshops and exchanges,
  4. Collaboration in mutual interest in regional and international multilateral parliamentary bodies in furtherance of bilateral relations.

**Ease of Doing Business – India State wise Ranking**

• Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry has recently released the final rankings of States in Ease of Doing Business.
• DIPP in collaboration with the **World Bank** conducted an annual reform exercise for all States and UTs under the Business Reform Action Plan (BRAP).
• The top rankers are **Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Haryana.**
• Jharkhand and Gujarat stood fourth and fifth respectively.
• The aim of this exercise is to improve delivery of various Central Government regulatory functions and services in an efficient, effective and transparent manner.
• It is for the first time that DIPP has introduced taking feedback to ensure that the reforms have reached ground level.

**GRACE-FO**

• NASA has launched Gravity Recovery and Climate Experiment Follow-On (GRACE-FO) mission recently.
• It will map changes in water and ice around the world by detecting variations in Earth's gravity.
• It involves two identical spacecraft that will orbit the Earth in tandem.
- It is a follow-on mission to the original GRACE mission, which mapped Earth's gravity field from 2002 to 2017.
- Both missions are joint projects between NASA and the GFZ German Research.
- To detect these gravitational changes, the twin spacecraft will fly about 220 km apart and send microwave signals back and forth.
- When they pass over a region where gravity increases or decreases, the distance between the two spacecraft will change slightly, allowing the satellites to map Earth's gravity field.

**Best tourist spot**

- Western Ghats has figured in *Lonely Planet’s top five “2018 Best in Asia” list*, a collection of 10 of the best destinations to visit in the continent for the year.
- It came 4th in the list of the lonely Planet, which is considered a Bible by travellers worldwide.
- It is one of the Hottest Biodiversity Hotspots and UNESCO World Heritage site.
- It is older than the Himalayas and well known for its rich and unique flora and fauna.
- Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthes kunthiana*), which has started blooming after 12 years in the famed hill station of Munnar has found mention in report.
- The neelakurinji flower blooms only once every 12 years and is expected to boom from August to October 2018.

**Eat Right Movement**

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) recently unveiled ‘The Eat Right Movement’.
- The programme aims to engage and enable citizens to improve their health and well-being by making the right food choices.
- It is built on two broad pillars of ‘Eat Healthy’ and ‘Eat Safe’.
- FSSAI has also undertaken ‘Safe and Nutritious Food (SNF)’ initiative to promote awareness towards consumption of safe and nutritious food.
FSSAI has been established under Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is the administrative Ministry for the implementation of FSSAI.

**Plastic Ban**

- State Government of Odisha has recently announced complete ban on use of plastic in several places from October 2, this year.
- The Housing & Urban Development department and Panchayati raj department have been mandated for executing the order in urban and rural areas, respectively.
- The Forest & Environment department will monitor the plastic pollution control work across the state.

**Source:** The Hindu, PIB

**12-07-2018**

**United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)**

- Third Intergovernmental Group of Experts (IGE) on consumer protection was recently convened by UNCTAD.
- India was represented by Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
- UNCTAD is a permanent intergovernmental body established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1964.
- It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland and part of the UN Secretariat.
- It is a part of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG).
- It was formed specifically to handle the problems of developing countries dealing with trade, investment and development issues.

**Consumer Protection in India**

- The Consumer Protection Bill, 2018 was introduced in the Lok Sabha earlier this year to replace Consumer Protection Act, 1986.
- The Bill enforces consumer rights and provides a mechanism for redressal of complaints regarding defect in goods and deficiency in services.
- The Bill sets up a Central Consumer Protection Authority to promote, protect and enforce consumer rights as a class.
- The Bill establishes Consumer Protection Councils at the district, state and national levels to render advise on consumer protection.
- If a consumer suffers an injury from a defect in a good or a deficiency in service, he may file a claim of product liability against the manufacturer, the seller, or the service provider.
- Consumers in India have been guaranteed rights by the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 of Parliament, namely:
  1. Right to Safety;
  2. Right to be informed;
  3. Right to choose;
  4. Right to be heard;
  5. Right to seek redressal;
  6. Right to consumer education.

**Workshop on Greenhouse Gas Inventories in Asia (WGIA)**

- WGIA is an initiative of Government of Japan.
- It is to improve the quality of Greenhouse Gas Inventories of Asian countries by building capacities through training and exchange of experience.
- Members of WGIA - 15 countries including Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.
- India is hosting WGIA for the first time.
• Workshop has been organized by the Ministry of Environment, Government of Japan and is being hosted by Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) in New Delhi.
• GHG inventory experts from member countries participated along with representatives from UNFCCC, IPCC, FAO and other specialized agencies.

New Pigment in Mushroom

• Goa University has recently reported the discovery of a new pigment from local wild mushrooms.
• The mushrooms contain new sulphur-rich melanin biopigment of immense bioindustrial, biomedical (anti-cancer, anti-tumour) and biotechnological potential.
• It may be the world’s first sulphur-rich edible melanin.
• A Ph.D student, who is a national scholar under Department of Science & Technology INSPIRE Project, cracked the problem in three years, which had eluded scientific community from 40 countries for the past 100 years.

INSPIRE Programme

• "Innovation in Science Pursuit for Inspired Research (INSPIRE)" is an innovative programme sponsored and managed by the Department of Science & Technology for attraction of talent to Science.
• The basic objective of INSPIRE is to communicate to the youth of the country the excitements of creative pursuit of science, attract talent to the study of science at an early age.
• It helps in building the required critical human resource pool for strengthening and expanding the Science & Technology system and R&D base.
• A striking feature of the programme is that it does not believe in conducting competitive exams for identification of talent at any level.

Religious Minority Status to Jews
● The Gujarat government has granted religious minority status to the Jewish community in the State.
● Gujarat is the third state in India to accord minority status after Maharashtra and West Bengal.
● It will enable the community to get benefits of welfare schemes formulated for religious minority communities.
● Gujarat is home to about 170 Jews, mostly centered in the western city of Ahmedabad.
● The city also is home to the only synagogue in the state, the Magen Abraham Synagogue, built in 1934.

Source: The Hindu, PIB

13-07-2018

India and Indonesia Cooperation

● Indonesia has recently agreed to give India access to its port for operational turnaround for Indian Navy.
● In a first, Indian ship INS Sumitra berthed at Sabang Port close to the Malacca Strait for operational turnaround.
● INS Sumitra sailed from Port Blair to Sabang, where it will take provisions and fuel before going for further deployment in the Indian Ocean.
● It will increase the Indian Navy’s footprint in the region.
• Sabang port is in Sumatra island of Indonesia

**Buddha of Swat**

• Buddha of Swat is located in Jahanabad, the epicentre of Swat’s Buddhist heritage, a beautiful valley in the foothills of the Himalayas.
• It belongs to 7th century depicted in a lotus position at the base of a granite cliff in northern Pakistan.
• It was damaged by Afghan Taliban in 2007.
• It is restored recently by Italian government nearly 12 years after the Afghan Talibans damaged.
Directive of Archaeological Survey of India

- The Archaeological Survey of India, an organisation under the Ministry of Culture, has recently issued a notification regarding photography within the premises of archaeological monuments.
- ASI has decided to allow photography within the premises of all centrally protected monuments/sites except three sites.
- The 3 monuments/sites in which the photography would not be permitted are Ajanta Caves and Leh Palace having paintings, and Mausoleum of Taj Mahal.

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD)

- The EBRD is a multilateral development bank set up in 1991 after the fall of the Berlin Wall.
- It aims to promote private and entrepreneurial initiative in emerging Europe.
- It invests in 38 emerging economies across three continents.
- The Indian government had applied for membership in the London-based EBRD in December 2017.
The EBRD board of governors, voted unanimously in favour of the country's application in March 2018, with the entire membership process completed this week.
India takes a shareholding in the EBRD but it will not be a recipient of EBRD financing.
India's membership opens up further joint investment prospects in markets such as Central Asia, Egypt and Jordan.

Global Innovation Index (GII)

The 11th edition of Global Innovation Index (GII) has ranked India as the 57th most innovative nation in the world.
The GII is being developed jointly by Cornell University, the Paris-based business school Insead and the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in Geneva.
GII ranks 126 economies based on 80 indicators.
India has improved its ranking from 60th position in 2016 and 81st position in 2015.
China improved its ranking from 22 in 2017 to 17 this year.
Since 2011, Switzerland has been ranked at the top every year. This year, Netherlands follows at second place and Sweden at third.

Deputy Chairman in Rajya Sabha

The Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha presides over the proceedings of the Rajya Sabha in the absence of the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.
The Deputy Chairman is elected from amongst the Rajya Sabha members.
The chairman of Rajya Sabha (Vice President of India) presides over its sessions.
Whenever a vacancy arises, the election takes place in the very next session.
Currently, the chair of Deputy Chairman remains vacant since June 30.
The Rajya Sabha has a panel of six to seven senior members as part of Vice-President’s panel who officiate in his absence.
But the panel can’t play the role of Deputy Chairman.
14-07-2018

INS Tarangini

- INS Tarangini is part of the first Training Squadron based at Kochi, under the Southern Naval Command of the Indian Navy.
- The word Tarangini means ‘the one that rides the waves’.
- It is the first ship of the Indian Navy to have circumnavigated the globe in the year 2003-04.
- It commenced ‘Lokayan-18’ from Kochi, to cover a distance of over 20,000 nautical miles to display the Indian flag at 15 ports across 13 countries.
- During its Lokayan voyage, it will participate in the prestigious ‘tall ship races - 2018’ at Sunderland Port in the UK.
- It has already participated in tall ship races conducted around the world in 2007, 2011 and 2015.

Longest Lunar Eclipse of the Century

- A total lunar eclipse will occur on July 27-28, 2018 with a totality duration of 1 hour 43 minutes which makes it the longest total lunar eclipse of this century (2001 AD to 2100 AD).
- In this eclipse, the Moon will pass through the central part of the Earth’s umbral shadow.
- Longer eclipse – The moon will be at apogee, means at farthest from the Earth in its orbit and will be moving at a slower speed in its orbit.
- This slower moving full Moon will take longer time and greater distance of Earth’s umbral shadow cone to travel, making it the longest duration of total eclipse of this century.
- Brighter Moon - On July 27, the red planet Mars, will also be at opposition, meaning that the Sun and Mars will lie opposite to each other, keeping the Earth in the middle.
This will result in Mars coming close to the Earth, causing it to appear brighter than normal.

**Govardhan Teerth**

- Union Tourism Ministry recently sanctions Rs.50 crore for development of Govardhan Parikrama in Mathura under PRASAD scheme.
- The ‘National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual, Augmentation Drive’ (PRASAD) has been launched by the Ministry of Tourism in the year 2014-15.
- Its objective is holistic development of identified pilgrimage and heritage destinations.
- Click [here](#) to know more about PRASAD scheme.

**S-400 Air Defence Systems**

- India is going ahead with the purchase of S-400 air defence systems from [Russia](#) despite American concerns.
- The U.S. has passed the [CAATSA](#) (Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act) that proposes to impose sanctions on nations that have significant defence relations with Russia.
- This has generated significant concern in India which is heavily dependent on Russia for military hardware.
- While the U.S. Administration has said waivers will be incorporated in it to protect friends and allies, it is yet to be done.

**Swachh Survekshan Grameen**

- Government has recently launched the Swachh Survekshan Grameen, 2018.
- It is a nationwide survey of rural India to rank the cleanest and dirtiest States and districts.
- A random selection of 6,980 villages across 698 districts will be surveyed.
- This is the first comprehensive survey for rural India, which has been launched after three successful editions of a similar survey in urban India.
The ranking will be based on qualitative and quantitative evaluation.

The three basic parameters are,

i. Direct observation of public places by independent surveyors,

ii. Service-level progress using data from the Swachh Bharat Mission’s information system and

iii. Citizens’ feedback.

**Resolution 2427**

- The UN Security Council has adopted a resolution 2427, which won unanimous approval of the 15 members of the council.
- The resolution aimed at a framework for mainstreaming protection, rights, well-being and **empowerment of children** throughout the conflict cycle.
- It also condemns attacks against schools and hospitals and the denial of humanitarian access by parties to armed conflict.
- It demands that all relevant parties immediately put an end to such practices and take special measures to protect children.

**Source: The Hindu, PIB, Business Standard**

**15-07-2018**

**Purvanchal Expressway**

- Recently foundation stone has been laid for the India’s longest expressway Poorvanchal Expressway in Azamgarh, in Uttar Pradesh.
- The 340 kilometre long Poorvanchal Expressway extends from Delhi in the west to Ghazipur in the east.
- The Purvanchal Expressway will connect Lucknow with Barabanki, Amethi, Sultanpur, Faizabad, Ambedkar Nagar, Azamgarh, Mau and Ghazipur.
- The Purvanchal Expressway will be linked with the Lucknow-Agra Expressway and Yamuna Expressway which connects Agra to Delhi and
will considerably bring down the travel time between Delhi and eastern Uttar Pradesh.

- The Purvanchal Expressway will be linked with Varanasi through a separate link.

**Swachh Survekshan Grameen**

- It is an Independent Survey to be Conducted in all Districts from 1st to 31st August.
- The results will be announced in the form of a ranking of all districts and states on the basis of quantitative and qualitative sanitation (Swachhata) parameters.
- As part of Swachh Survekshan Grameen 6,980 villages in 698 districts across India will be covered. Total 34,000 public places namely schools, anganwadis, public health centres, haat/bazaar/religious places in these villages will be visited for survey.

**Kabir Jayanti**

- Kabir Jayanti is an annual event that is observed in the honour of Sant Kabir Das.
- It is celebrated on the ‘Purnima’ (full moon day) during the month of ‘Jyesta’ in the traditional Hindu calendar.
- This occurrence falls during the months of May-June as per the Gregorian calendar.
- This year Kabir Jayanti will be celebrated in 15th July.

**Sant Kabir Das**

- Sant Kabir Das was a very renowned saint, poet and social reformer of India who lived during the 15th century, born in Varanasi.
- His esteemed works and poems describe the greatness and oneness of the Supreme Being.
According to the legends, Kabir Das was born to Muslim parents in the state of Uttar Pradesh.

He did not believe in any religious discrimination and readily accepted all the religions.

Some of his famous writings include ‘SakhiGranth’, ‘Anurag Sagar’, ‘Bijak’ and ‘Kabir Granthawali’.

A religious community known as ‘Kabir Panth’ was founded by him and the members of this forum are referred as ‘Kabir Panthis’, implying the followers of Kabir Das.

**Institute of Cost Accountants**

- The Institute of Cost Accountants of India (ICAI), previously known as the Institute of Cost & Works Accountants of India (ICWAI).
- It is a premier statutory professional accountancy body in India with the objects of promoting, regulating and developing the profession of Cost Accountancy.
- It is the only licensing cum regulating body of Cost & Management Accountancy profession in India.
- It recommends the Cost Accounting Standards to be followed by companies in India to which statutory maintenance of cost records applicable.
- ICAI is solely responsible for setting the auditing and assurance standards for statutory Cost Audit to be followed in the Audit of Cost statements in India.

**Draft rules on Blood Donation**

- Union government has proposed to rename 'blood banks' as 'blood centres'.
- According to the proposed rules approved by the Drugs Technical Advisory Board blood centres' will be authorised premises in an organisation or institution for carrying out all or any of the operations including collection, processing, storage and distribution of blood.
- The minimum age for a blood donor remains 18 years and the maximum 65 years.
According to the proposed rules, women cannot donate blood for 12 months after delivery, six months after abortion, during breast-feeding and menstruation.

The rules recommend deferring blood donation for six and 12 months after recovery following a minor and major surgery respectively.

Also, one cannot donate blood for three months after recovering from malaria, for six months after recovering from dengue and Chikungunya and four months after recuperating from being infected by Zika virus.

Source: PIB, Business Standard, Economic Times

16-07-2018

World Customs Organisation (WCO)

- India has become the Vice-Chair (Regional Head) of the Asia Pacific Region of WCO for a period of two years (2018-2020).
- WCO established in 1952, is an independent intergovernmental body whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.
- WCO is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters.
- It represents 182 Customs administrations across the globe that collectively process approximately 98% of world trade.
- The organisation has divided its membership into six regions. Each of the regions is represented by an elected vice-chairperson to the WCO council.
- It is considered as the voice of the International Customs community.

Social Media Communication Hubs

- The Supreme Court recently took a strong note of the social media communication hub proposed by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
• It is a hub for monitoring online data and will be setup in each district across the country.
• Using this analytical tool, the Centre wishes to track social media movements in every district of the country to predict a global public perception.
• It may also help in tackling fake news and the Centre will gauge people’s reactions to their schemes and strategies.
• The SC has observed that it would result in creating a surveillance state.

**MeerKAT radio telescope**

• MeerKAT telescope is a scientific mega-project in South Africa.
• It will be an array of 64 interlinked receptors to unlock cosmic conundrums from dark energy to detecting extraterrestrial life.
• A receptor is the complete antenna structure, with the main reflector, sub-reflector and all receivers, digitisers and other electronics installed.
• It will be incorporated into the complex Square Kilometre Array (SKA) instrument.
• It is the biggest radio telescope of its kind in the southern hemisphere.

**Golden Jackel**

• Destruction of mangrove cover in the Bandar Reserve Forest is forcing the golden jackal out of its habitat.
• The conservation status of the animal is the ‘least concern’ and it preys on wild crab and fish.
• The Golden Jackal is widespread in North and north-east Africa, Arabian Peninsula, Eastern Europe and the entire Indian Subcontinent.
• In India, jackal populations achieve high densities in pastoral areas such as Kutch, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, and Haryana.
• It is present in all protected areas of India except for those in the high elevation regions of the Himalayas.
• The species is included in CITES Appendix III (in India).
• Jackals feature on Schedule III of the Wildlife Protection Act (1972) of India and are afforded the least legal protection (mainly to control trade of pelts and tails).
Harrier birds

- Harrier birds are migratory raptor species that regularly visits vast swathes of India.
- India has one of the largest roosting sites in the world for Pallid Harriers and Montagu’s Harriers.
- Recent reports highlights that the numbers of birds visiting the site are declining.
- While a general declining trend was observed in all the monitored sites, researchers noted the most dramatic changes at the Rollapadu Bustard Sanctuary in Andhra Pradesh's Kurnool district.
- In Hessarghatta on the outskirts of Bengaluru, Western Marsh Harriers declined significantly, leaving the area nearly deserted.
- The gravest concern is the loss of grasslands, either to urbanisation or to agriculture.
- Excessive use of pesticides in farms in and around the roosting sites could also be a reason for the lowered population counts.

Source: The Hindu, PIB

17-07-2018
**Vikas Engine**

- Vikas is a family of liquid fuelled rocket engines that powers India’s launch vehicles PSLV and GSLV.
- It is aimed at improving the payload capability of PSLV, GSLV and GSLV Mk-III launch vehicles.
- It is used in second stage of PSLV which consists of four stages in its operation (Solid-Liquid-Solid-Liquid).
- It is used in second stage and four strap-on stages of GSLV.
- GSLV is a three stage vehicle (Solid-Liquid-Cryogenic Engine) with four liquid strap-on boosters.
- ISRO has recently improved the thrust of the Vikas engine which is expected to boost the rocket engine.
- The main beneficiary of the high-thrust Vikas engine is GSLV-Mark III launcher, which is expected to lift 4,000-kg satellites to space.
- GSLV-Mark III uses twin engine core liquid stage (L110).
- GSLV – Mark III with upgraded Vikas engine would be the third Mk-III and the first working one to be designated MkIII Mission-1 or M1.

**Testing of Brahmos**

- DRDO and the Indian Army have test fired a supersonic BrahMos cruise missile under “extreme weather conditions” from Integrated Test Range at Balasore, Odisha.
- The test was under extreme weather conditions with sea state 7 (waves as high as 9 m).
- Sea state is the degree of turbulence at sea, generally measured on a scale of 0 to 9 according to average wave height.
- BrahMos is the supersonic cruise missile that can be launched from land, sea, sub-sea and air based platforms.
- It is considered one of the world’s fastest cruise missile currently in operational use.
- The missile’s range is estimated at around 300 to 400 kilometers with speeds of up to Mach 2.8 to 3.
- The land-launched and sea-launched variants of the BrahMos are already in service with the Indian Army and Navy.
Recently, a new production line for BrahMos transport launch canisters in Vadodara in the western state of Gujarat,

DRDO is also working on an indigenous missile booster for the BrahMos.

Wholesale Price Index (WPI)

• WPI represents the price of basket of goods at a wholesale stage i.e. goods that are sold in bulk and traded between organizations instead of consumers.
• WPI is calculated by the Office of Economic Advisor, DIPP under Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
• The base year for the index is 2011-12.
• The components of WPI include Primary articles, Manufacturing items, fuel and power with different weightages assigned to them.
• The weightages are Primary Articles (Weight 22.62%), Fuel & Power (Weight 13.15%), and Manufactured Products (Weight 64.23%).
• It basically indicates the rise in profitability of industries.
• **Recent Concern** - WPI has risen to 5.77% in June, the highest since December 2013.
• It is driven in large part by rising fuel prices.
• The real upward push came from the crude petroleum and natural gas segment, which saw inflation surging to 48.7% in June from 26.9% in the previous month.
• Similarly, the fuel and power segment saw inflation quicken to 16.2% from 11.2% over the same period and inflation in manufacturing accelerated in June to 4.17% from 3.73% in May.

Child Care Institutions

• Central government has directed state government to ensure that all the child care institutions should be registered and linked to CARA.
• Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) is a statutory body of Ministry of Women & Child Development, Government of India.
- It functions as the nodal body for adoption of Indian children and is mandated to monitor and regulate in-country and inter-country adoptions.
- It is designated as the Central Authority to deal with inter-country adoptions in accordance with the provisions of the Hague Convention on Inter-country Adoption, 1993, ratified by Government of India in 2003.

**Bill against witch hunting**

- President has recently given assent to the Assam government’s bill against witch-hunting.
- Witch-hunting involves casting a spell on women victims to gain control over them by magic.
- The victim who is branded as a witch is subjected to numerous forms of torture, beatings, burns, paraded naked through the village, forced to eat human excrement and sometimes even raped.
- In India, witch hunting dates back hundreds of years.
- It emanated in the Morigaon district of Assam which is now infamously known as the ‘Indian Capital of Black Magic’.
- Assam Witch Hunting (Prohibition, Prevention and Protection) Bill, 2015 considers the act of witch hunting as cognizable, non-bailable and non-compoundable offense.
- It prescribes a prison term of up to seven years and up to Rs. 5 lakh in fine for calling a person witch.
- It also has provisions to come with Section 302 of the IPC (punishment for murder) if someone is killed after being branded a witch.

**Source: The Hindu, PIB**

18-07-2018
Sagarmala initiative

- Government has recently inaugurated Hi-tech labs in centre of excellence in Maritime & Ship Building (CEMS), Vishakapatnam.
- The prime objective of the sagarmala project is to promote port-led development and to provide infrastructure to transport goods quickly, efficiently and cost-effectively.
- It intends to enhance the capacity of major and non-major ports.
- It also strives to ensure sustainable development of the population living in the coastal economic zones.
- Community Development Fund will be created for projects and activities which strive to bring development for coastal communities.

National Database of Arms Licenses System

- Union Home Ministry is planning to create National Database of Arms Licenses System.
- It is to create vigilance on authorised private gun holders and eliminate possibilities of issuing arms license to bogus persons.
- Ministry will amend the Arms Act to create the database.

Global Compact for Migration

- United Nations has created Global compact for safe, orderly and regular migration for the first time.
- It is the first intergovernmental negotiated agreement under the auspices of UN to cover all dimensions of migration.
- The agreement was signed by adopting a non-binding political declaration "New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants" in 2016.
- Its objective is to address the challenges fo migration, strengthen migrant rights.
- Under the agenda, member States committed to cooperate internationally to safe facilitate migration.

Bansagar Canal Project

- Bansagar canal project was recently inaugurated in Mirzapur in Uttar Pradesh.
The project is a joint venture between Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.
It is a multipurpose river valley project on Son River.
It aims to bring boost to irrigation in the region.

**Son River**

Son River originates near Amarkantak in Madhya Pradesh.
It is one of the tributary of Ganges from Central India.
It is the second largest of the southern tributaries of Ganga. Yamuna is the largest tributary.

Source: The Hindu, PIB

19-07-2018

**Fair Remunerative Price**

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane for sugar season 2018-19.
The FRP so approved shall be applicable for purchase of sugarcane from the farmers in the sugar season by the sugar mills.
The FRP has been determined on the basis of recommendations of Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) and after consultation with State Governments and other stake-holders.

Recommended FRP has been arrived at by taking into account various factors such as cost of production, overall demand-supply situations.

FRP also takes domestic and international prices, inter-crop price parity, terms of trade prices of primary by-products, and likely impact of FRP on general price level and resource use efficiency into account.

**Agartala-Akhaura Rail Link Project**

- It is a 45-km dual gauge line between Agartala in Tripura and Akhaura, a sub-district of Chittagong in Bangladesh.
- The project is developed as a part of India’s $4.5 billion third line of credit extended to Bangladesh for its infrastructure and social sector development.
- The Agartala-Akhaura rail project will lend full connectivity from east to west of Bangladesh, apart from enabling trade relations between the two neighbours.
- Once completed, the railway link is expected to cut the distance between Agartala and Kolkata by more than 1,000 km, it will also enhance India’s access to Chittagong port in Bangladesh.
PMEGP Scheme

- Prime Minister’s Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) is a credit linked subsidy scheme, for setting up of new micro-enterprises and to generate employment opportunities in rural as well as urban areas of the country.
- It is enabled through KVIC, State Khadi & Village Industries Board (KVIB) and District Industries Centre (DIC).
- Under the PMEGP, general category beneficiaries can avail of margin money subsidy of 25% of the project cost in rural areas and 15% in urban areas.
- For beneficiaries belonging to SC/ST/Women/PH/Minorities/Ex-Servicemen/NER, the margin money subsidy is 35% in rural areas and 25% in urban areas.
- The maximum cost of projects is Rs.25 lakh in the manufacturing sector and Rs.10 lakh in the service sector.

Regional Aviation Partnership
The Union Cabinet has approved the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) amongst BRICS Nations.

The Regional Aviation Partnership Cooperation will benefit Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

The objective is that BRICS countries would benefit from the establishing of an institutional framework to cooperate in the field of civil aviation.

The MoU has the potential to spur greater trade, investment, tourism and cultural exchanges amongst the BRICS Nations.

**Exercise Pitch Black 2018**

The Indian Air Force for the first time is participating with fighter aircraft in Exercise Pitch Black 2018 (PB-18), which is scheduled from 24 Jul 18 to 18 Aug 18 in Australia.

Exercise Pitch Black is a biennial multi-national large force employment warfare exercise hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).

The exercise will provide unique opportunity for exchange of knowledge and experience with these nations in a dynamic warfare environment.

**Source: PIB, Economic Times**

20-07-2018

**National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research**

- Indian Government has recently renamed National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCAOR) as “National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research”.
- NCAOR was formed in 1998 with an objective to conduct expedition to India’s base stations in Antarctica.
- NCAOR is under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
The intent behind the name change is to show that government is refocusing its priorities to Arctic.

It is because of the opportunities and challenges posed by climate change in Arctic.

Now, India only has one Arctic observation station near Norway.

India is already an observer at the Arctic Council.

**Arctic Council**

- It is a forum of countries that decides on managing the region’s resources and popular livelihood in Arctic region.
- The *Ottawa Declaration* lists the few countries as Members of the Arctic Council.
- They are Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States.
- **Observer countries** are China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Netherlands, Poland, Singapore, Spain, and the United Kingdom.
- India setup an underground observatory, called IndARC in 2015.
- It is located at the Kongsfjorden fjord, half way between Norway and the North Pole.

**Samagra Shiksha Scheme**

- Samagra Shiksha is an Integrated Scheme for School Education formulated by the Department of School Education.
- It is a centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) subsumes 3 erstwhile CSS schemes such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).
- It is an overarching programme for the school education sector extending from pre-school to class XII.
- It aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels of school education.
- It envisages the ‘school’ as a continuum from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary to senior secondary levels.
Workshop on Empowering Women

- The workshop was jointly organised by Women Entrepreneurship Platform (WEP) and University of Delhi.
- WEP was launched by Niti Aayog the occasion of International Women’s Day, 2018.
- The initiative is aimed at building an ecosystem for women across India to realize their entrepreneurial aspirations, scale-up innovative initiatives and chalk-out sustainable, long-term strategies for their businesses.
- The three pillars on which WEP is built:
  1. Ichha Shakti (motivating aspiring entrepreneurs to start their enterprise)
  2. Gyaan Shakti (providing knowledge and ecosystem support to women entrepreneurs to help them foster entrepreneurship)
  3. Karma Shakti (providing hands-on support to entrepreneurs in setting-up and scaling up businesses).

Ganga Vriksharopan Abhiyan

- National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) has organised “Ganga Vriksharopan Abhiyan” in Ganga basin states.
- The campaign has been initiated as part of the Forest Interventions in Ganga (FIG) component of Namami Gange programme.
- It aims to bring greater awareness among people and other stakeholders regarding the importance of afforestation for the task of Ganga Rejuvenation
- Afforestation and augmentation of existing forest along the Ganga strengthen the riparian ecosystem thereby contributing to the overarching cause of Ganga Rejuvenation.
- The five states covered are Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

LiDAR

- Light Detection and Ranging (LiDAR) is a remote sensing instrument.
- It is used as a monitoring system for mapping and modelling in micro-topography, forestry, agriculture, meteorology and environmental pollution.
- LiDAR has been recently deployed at Gulf of Khambat, off the Gujarat Coast by National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE).
- The objective of the installation is to assess offshore wind resource.

**National Resource Centres**

- The Government has proposed to set up National Resource Centres (NRCs) to prepare online training material.
- The resource centres will focus on latest developments in the discipline, new & emerging trends, pedagogical improvements and methodologies for transacting revised curriculum.
- Under this initiative, all in-service teachers, irrespective of their subject and seniority have an enabling opportunity to keep update of the latest developments in their disciplines through the technology based online refresher course, through SWAYAM platform.

**Source: The Hindu, PIB**

**21-07-2018**

**BRICS**

- BRICS is an association of five major emerging national economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- The BRICS members are all leading developing or newly industrialized countries, but they are distinguished by their large, sometimes fast-growing economies and significant influence on regional affairs.
- All five are G-20 members.
- BRICS developed New Development Bank (NDB) which will have capital of US$50 billion with each country contributing US$10 billion, while the monetary fund will have US$100 billion at its disposal.
Since 2012, the BRICS group of countries have been planning an optical fibre submarine communications cable system to carry telecommunications between the BRICS countries, known as the BRICS Cable.

Since 2009, the BRICS nations have met annually at formal summits.

China has hosted the 9th BRICS Summit (2017) at Xiamen province.

Xiamen Declaration of BRICS forum was recently adopted in its 9th summit.

It explicitly called out several Pakistan-based terror organisations and expressed concern on the security situation in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region.

**BRICS Media Forum**

- BRICS Media Forum, 2018 is a high-level dialogue among media organisations from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.
- It was held at Cape Town in South Africa recently under the theme ‘Fostering an Inclusive, Just World Order’.
- It was organised on the occasion of former South African President Nelson Mandela’s 100th birth anniversary on July 18.
- The Forum was attended by 38 mainstream media organisations from BRICS nations, including five from India.
- The forum unanimously agreed to adopt the Cape Town Declaration 2018.
- It pledged to strive to create a media landscape that upholds the integrity of news that is created and shared through the BRICS nations.
- A decision to establish BRICS Media Academy and a BRICS news portal was also taken.

**BRICS Health Ministers’ Meeting**

- 8th BRICS Health Ministers’ was organised recently at Durban, South Africa.
- In this meeting, India affirms strong support for TB cooperation plan in every aspect.
Regional Aviation Partnership Cooperation

- The Union Cabinet has approved the signing of Memorandum of Understanding amongst BRICS Nations on the Regional Aviation Partnership Cooperation.
- The objective is that BRICS countries will benefit from the establishing of an institutional framework to cooperate in the field of civil aviation.
- The MoU has the potential to spur greater trade, investment, tourism and cultural exchanges amongst the BRICS Nations.

Ekalavya Schools

- Ministry of Tribal Affairs recently approves setting up of Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs) in States/ UTs.
- Ekalavya Residential Schools aims to provide education to tribals in their local environment.
- Target – Ekalavya schools in every block with more than 50% ST population and at least 20,000 tribal persons by 2022.
- Ekalavya schools will be on a par with Navodaya Vidyalayas.
- It will have special facilities for preserving local art and culture, besides providing training in sports and skill development.
- The Ekalavya Residential School Scheme isn’t new. It has been around for many years now. However, the government has signaled in Budget 2018 that it wants to expand the scope.

Student Police Cadet (SPC) Programme

- Home Ministry is planning to launch the Student Police Cadet (SPC) programme in Gurgaon.
- The programme designed for students of Class VIII and IX to start a project on tolerance, moral values, patience and ethics among others.
- The programme is aimed at making them better citizens and seeks to build a bridge between the police and the larger community through school students.
- It will be implemented first in government schools.
• It seeks to cover issues like community policing, fight against social evils, safety of women and children, fight against corruption and disaster management.

**Scientific Research Infrastructure Management and Networks (SRIMAN)**

• The government has proposed a new policy “SRIMAN” that plans to hire out to researchers all lab equipment that cost more than Rs. 10 lakh.
• It is expected to transform scientific instruments in government labs into lucrative assets generating a steady rental income.
• It would also reduce the amount of time such expensive instruments remain idle.
• Currently, the practice of researchers bidding for time-slots to use lab instruments is typically seen more with very expensive equipment, such as radio telescopes and particle-accelerators, which cost crores of rupees.

**Source: The Hindu, PIB**

**22-07-2018**

**Dhole**

• Wildlife scientists from Wildlife Institute of India (WII) have recently satellite-collared a dhole, the Indian wild dog, for the first time.
• The satellite transmitter will help to study the habits of the endangered species.
• Dhole is native to Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Thailand.
• It is included in CITES – Appendix II (2013) and are legally protected in the countries where they occur.
• It is listed as “Endangered” under IUCN red list of Threatened species.

Upgradation of Monuments by ASI

• Ministry of Culture has proposed upgradation of 7 monuments in Tamil Nadu.
• The Archaeological Survey of India will carry out the upgradation of infrastructural and tourist-friendly facilities.
• The idea is to create good quality infrastructure.
• Monuments include
  1. The Shore Temple in Mamallapuram,
  2. Vellore Fort,
  3. Brihadeeswarar Temple in Thanjavur,
  4. Kailasanathar Temple in Kancheepuram,
  5. Sittannavasal Caves in Pudukottai,
  6. Gingee Fort in Villupuram and
  7. Moovar Koil in Kodumbalur.

Advanced SAFAR

• Union Environment Ministry has recently unveiled the most advanced System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting (SAFAR) in New Delhi.
• The system, first of its kind in the country, was developed indigenously in by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, Pune and operationalized by IMD.
• It will also measure sun’s UV-Index, PM1 and Mercury in addition to monitoring and forecasting regular air quality.
• In addition to regular air quality parameters like PM2.5, PM10, Sulfur Dioxide, Ozone, Nitrogen Oxides, Carbon Monoxide, the system will also monitor the existence of Benzene, Toluene and Xylene.
• Based on UVI, skin advisories will be issued on display.

Global Slavery Index

• It is published by the Australia-based human rights group Walk Free Foundation.
• It includes data on three key variables
1. Prevalence of modern slavery in each country,
2. Vulnerability,

- Modern slavery refers to situations of exploitation that a person cannot leave because of threats, violence, coercion and abuse of power or deception.
- The report estimates most victims of modern slavery live in Asia.
- North Korea has the highest prevalence of modern slavery globally, with one in 10 of the population, or 2.6 million people, victims of modern slavery.
- The 10 countries with the largest number of absolute numbers of people in modern slavery include India, China, Pakistan, North Korea, Nigeria, Iran, Indonesia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Russia and the Philippines.

Delhi Dialogue

- India hosted the 10th edition of the Delhi Dialogue (DD X) under the theme “Strengthening India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation” in New Delhi.
- Delhi Dialogue is a premier annual event to discuss politico-security, the economic and socio-cultural engagement between India and ASEAN.
- It was the first major event to be organised after the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit.
- It was organised in partnership with the Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS).
- India-ASEAN Commemorative Summit was held earlier this year, marking 25 years of India-ASEAN ties.
- The Delhi Declaration was released after the summit.

Source: The Hindu, PIB
Khelo India Talent Identification Development scheme

- Khelo India is a National Programme for Development of Sports, which aims to enable a pathway from schools to Olympics.
- Each athlete selected under the scheme will get a scholarship of Rs. 5 lakh per annum for eight years.
- The government also aims to set up 20 universities across the country as hubs of sporting excellence.
- Following the successful conduct of the Khelo India School Games, Sports Authority of India cleared the proposal of Khelo India Talent Identification Development scheme.
- It is a scholarship programme designed to take care of their expenses including training, development, boarding and lodging and tournament exposure apart from offering them out of pocket expense allowance.

National Moth Week

- National Moth Week was initiated in 2012 by scientist in America.
- Its main aim is to increase awareness on Moths and encourage people to observe and document moths in backyards and neighbourhoods.
- It is observed in the last week of July in more than 40 countries worldwide.
- India is among 40 countries in which enthusiasts and citizen scientists are devoting the week from July 21 to 29 to document the insects

Digital Knowledge on Bird Species

- Wildlife scientists tried to use online data to study if bird occurrence has altered across India over time.
- However, with little data before 1980 was found digitally, it is difficult to make comparisons.
- Scientists at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and the University of Kansas have recently accessed more than 2 million bird occurrence data points from across India.
The study was carried out with an intent to evaluate the “digital accessible knowledge” of bird species occurrences.

They explored two sources - Global Biodiversity Information Facility and eBird.

**Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF)** is a network funded by the world’s governments focused on making scientific data on biodiversity available online.

**eBird** is the world’s largest biodiversity-related citizen science project where users contribute information on bird sightings.

### Salicornia

- Salicornia is a plant that grows in salty marshes in the mangrove wetlands.
- The plant can be used as a substitute to salt with low sodium content.
- The patients suffering from hypertension, diabetes and gastric related ailments prefer the Salicornia salad and salt.
- The production of the salt substitute has come down drastically in Gujarat with the scarcity of the Salicornia. Thus India is forced to import it from Israel and Scandinavian countries.
- Recently, Andhra Pradesh government has intensified the efforts to tap commercial benefits from the plant through cultivation as well as extraction.
- The government has documented the presence of the Salicornia along the coastline of Krishna district, exploring the possibilities to extract the salt substitute through various methods.

### K9 Vajra-T Guns

- K9 Vajra-T is an artillery gun produced by South Korea.
- India is going to procure this artillery guns and it will be the first induction of heavy artillery since the Swedish Bofors guns imported in the 1980s.
- It is a 155-mm, 52-calibre self-propelled artillery gun with a maximum range of 40 km, customised from the original K9 Thunder gun.
The fire control system has been customised for desert conditions to the requirements of the Indian Army.

India is also planning to procure M777 ultra-light howitzers from the U.S.

The M777 is a 155-mm, 39-calibre towed artillery gun and weighs just four tonnes, making it transportable under slung from helicopters.

**Solar Park**

- Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan have topped the list of states with maximum solar power generation capacity approved under solar parks in India.
- A solar park is a concentrated zone of development of solar power generation projects.
- It provides developers an area with proper infrastructure and access to amenities and where the risk of the projects can be minimized.
- The solar park scheme also provides for reduced number of statutory approvals to facilitate faster and easier development.

**Source:** The Hindu, PIB

**24-07-2018**

**FDI Confidence Index**

- The index is compiled by AT Kearney, an American global management consulting firm.
- It ranks top 10 destinations for FDI in terms of its attractiveness.
- India ranks 11th in 2018 index, down from 8 in 2017 and 9 in 2016. Thus, India has fallen out of top 10 destination.
- The report by AT kearney highlighted that the fall in rank is due to troubles in the implementation of the goods and services tax and the government’s demonetisation decision in 2016.
It also highlighted several of the reforms such as removing the Foreign Investment Promotion Board and liberalising FDI limits in key sector.

**Public Affairs Index**

- The index has been developed by Bengaluru-based think tank Public Affairs Centre.
- It ranks States in India based on 10 themes 30 focus subjects and 100 indicators.
- The themes include,
  - Essential infrastructure,
  - support to human development,
  - social protection,
  - women and children,
  - crime,
  - law and order,
  - delivery of justice,
  - environment, transparency and accountability,
  - fiscal management and economic freedom.
- The current edition 2018 focus on the subject "The Children of India".
- The latest index released by PAC shows that Kerala has been ranked as the number one state in terms of governance for the past three years, followed by Tamil Nadu.
- Despite the political instability and the public protests seen in the recent past, Tamil Nadu continues to be ranked second in terms of governance.
- Telangana, Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka follow the top two states.
- Telangana, which had an overall ranking of 20 in 2017, has shot up to third place in the new index.
- Among smaller states, Jammu and Kashmir held its position as the best in terms of governance for the second consecutive year, followed by Himachal Pradesh.

**Seva Bhoj Yojna**

- It is a **Central Sector Scheme** under the Ministry of Culture.
Under the Scheme, CGST and Central Government’s share of IGST paid by Charitable Religious Institutions on purchase of specific raw food items shall be reimbursed to them as financial assistance by the Government of India.

The charitable religious institutions include Temples, Gurudwara, Dharmik Ashram, Mosques, Dargah, Church, Matth, Monastries etc.

As per the scheme guidelines, the institutions applying for financial assistance are required to produce a certificate from District Magistrate indicating that the institution is involved in charitable religious activities.

These institutions must be distributing free food to public/devotees etc. since last 3 years on daily/monthly basis.

In case of mis-use of funds, it provide for penalties such as black listing the organisations, recovering the financial assistance with penal interest apart from taking criminal action as per law.

Shekatkar Committee

The committee was formed by Ministry of Defence in the year 2016.

It focussed on enhancing combat capability and rebalance defence expenditure.

The Report was taken up by the ministry to frame key action points and roadmap for implementation.

Some of the recommendations taken by the ministry include
  - Better utilization of Supply and Transportation echelons and Animal Transport Units.
  - Closure of Military Farms and Army Postal Establishments in peace locations.
  - Enhancement in standards for recruitment of clerical staff and drivers in the Army.
  - Improving the efficiency of the National Cadet Corps.

Border Haats
• Haat means market. Border haats are, specially designed marketplaces along the border of two countries which aim at promoting the well-being of the people dwelling in remote areas across the borders.
• The border haats are managed by Haat Management Committees (HMCs).
• In 2010, India and Bangladesh agreed to open haats in remote border areas trade, of locally produced commodities, completely free from duties and taxes.
• Last year, a MoU on Border Haats between India and Bangladesh was signed for establishment of a Joint Committee to review the border haats operation and propose new locations of Border Haats.
• The first meeting of the India-Bangladesh Joint Committee on Border Haats was recently held in Agartala, Tripura.

Pangolin

• A special unit of the Odisha Police has launched a drive to bust an international syndicate that illegally trades pangolin.
• Pangolins are nocturnal mammals, often called “scaly anteaters,” are covered in tough, overlapping scales.
• These burrowing mammals eat ants and termites using an extraordinarily long tongue, and are able to quickly roll themselves up into a tight ball when threatened.
• There are eight different pangolin species can be found across Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.
• They are the most trafficked mammal in the world.
• They are listed as "Endangered" in IUCN red list of threatened species.
• The scales of the pangolin are sold raw or fried in Asia for as much as $500 per kilogram for treating asthma and migraines.
• Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) is an international intergovernmental agreement to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.
• TRAFFIC is the wildlife trade monitoring network, which is a non-governmental organization working globally on trade in wild
animals and plants in the context of both biodiversity conservation and sustainable development.

Source: The Hindu, PIB, Business Standard

25-07-2018

Anti-Graft Amendment Bill

- The Lok Sabha has recently passed the Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2018.
- The bill termed bribe as ‘Undue advantage’, defined as ‘gratification other than legal renumeration’.
- It seeks to punish bribe-givers and bribe-takers.
- The bill provides for jail terms of three to seven years, besides fine, to those convicted of taking or giving bribes to public officials.
- The bill introduces powers and procedures for the attachment and forfeiture of property of public servants accused of corruption.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It makes specific provisions related to giving a bribe to a public servant, and giving a bribe by a commercial organisation.</td>
<td>No specific provision for offence of giving a bribe, except as abetment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police officer cannot begin probe without prior approval of relevant authority or government except when caught red-handed.</td>
<td>No such provisions in the Act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanction needed for prosecuting former officials for offences done while in office.</td>
<td>Sanction was required for serving officers only.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New section introduced for special court to confiscate property.</td>
<td>Not given under the act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It redefines criminal misconduct to only cover misappropriation of property and possession of disproportionate assets.</td>
<td>Criminal misconduct cover circumstances where the public official:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(i) uses illegal means,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) abuses his position, or</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(iii) disregards public interest and obtains a valuable thing or reward for himself or another person.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Exercise Pitch Black

- It is a multinational air exercise in Australia, involves over 100 aircraft from around the globe to provide opportunity to operate in a dynamic warlike environment.
- It is going to be conducted in Darwin air base, Australia.
- Indian Air Force is going to participate in this exercise for the first time.

### Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0

- Ministry of Human Resource Department has recently launched Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0.
- It aimed at providing rural India with professional resource support from institutes of higher education.
- The scheme will link Higher Education Institutions with set of villages, so that these institutions can contribute to the economic and social betterment of these village communities using their knowledge base.
- The objectives of the scheme are
  - To engage the faculty and students of Higher Educational Institutions in understanding rural realities;
○ To allow Higher Educational Institutions to contribute to devising systems for smooth implementation of various Government Programs;
○ Identify and select existing innovative technologies, enable customization of technologies, or devise implementation methods for innovative solutions, as required by people.

Consolidation of Regional Rural Banks

- RRBs were set up with the objective to provide credit to the small and marginal farmers, agricultural labourers, artisans and small entrepreneurs in rural areas for development of productive activities.
- RRBs are jointly owned by Government of India, the concerned State Government and Sponsor Banks with the issued capital in the ratio of 50:15:35 respectively.
- Earlier, the Government has sought comments of respective State Governments and Sponsor Banks on a roadmap for consolidation of RRBs within a State.
- In line with the proposal, the roadmap for consolidation of RRB has been prepared in consultation with NABARD.
- It is expected that it will bring better scale-efficiency, higher productivity, robust financial health of RRBs, improved financial inclusion and greater credit flow to rural areas.
- Earlier, the government approved the extension of the scheme of recapitalization of RRBs for the next 3 years upto 2019-20.
- This was done to help RRBs to maintain the minimum prescribed Capital to Risk Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR) of 9 per cent.

Scheme for Safeguarding the Intangible Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India

- Ministry of Culture has formulated this scheme for revitalizing various institutions, groups, individuals, NGOs, researchers and scholars to engage in activities for preserving and promoting the rich Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) of India.
The scheme is being implemented through Sangeet Natak Akademi, an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Culture.

It covers all recognized domains of ICH such as:
- oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage,
- Performing arts, Social practices, rituals and festive events,
- Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe,
- traditional craftsmanship etc.

Assistance under the scheme will be provided in the form of non-recurring grants, honoraria, infrastructure grants for the survival and propagation of all forms of ICH.

Assistance will also be provided for short research and referencing work of relevance to ICH.

It also supports the initiative of the Ministry of HRD in setting up Sector Skill Councils relating to art under the National Vocational Educational Qualifications Framework (NVEQF).

**Global Promotion of Kumbh Mela**

- Kumbh Mela is the largest congregation of pilgrims in the planet, held once in every 12 years in 4 places - Haridwar, Allahabad, Ujjain and Nashik.
- It represents a syncretic set of rituals related to worship and ritual cleansing in holy rivers in India.
- The intergovernmental committee for the safeguarding of the Intangible Heritage under UNESCO has recognised Kumbh Mela as an intangible heritage.
- The “49 day Kumbh Mela” is going to be held in January, 2019.
- The government is taking various measures to promote globally to attract foreign tourists.
- Some of the measures are,
  - Launch of ‘Chalo Kumbh Chalo’ campaign across the country
  - Development of a designated area for flag hoisting for 192 countries visiting Kumbh Mela

Source: The Hindu, PIB

26-07-2018

Global Disability Summit 2018

- The first ever Global Disability Summit was recently held in London.
- It was organised by the UK Department for International Development along with International Disability Alliance and the Government of Kenya.
- The motto of the Conference was to firm up the commitments of the country leaders towards the cause of persons with disabilities.
- The objectives of the summit are,
  - raise global attention and focus on a neglected area;
  - bring in new voices and approaches to broaden engagement;
  - mobilise new global and national commitments on disability; and,
  - showcase best practice and evidence from across the world.
- Union Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment represented India in the summit.

Kala Azar

- An outbreak of kala azar was recently reported from the kozhikode district, after two months of Nipah virus outbreak.
- Visceral leishmaniasis (VL), also known as kala-azar, is caused by the protozoan Leishmania parasites.
- It is transmitted to humans through infected sandflies.
- It is characterized by irregular bouts of fever, weight loss, enlargement of the spleen and liver, and anaemia.
- The parasite migrates to the internal organs such as the liver, spleen, and bone marrow, and, if left untreated, may result in the death.
- It is endemic to the Indian subcontinent in 119 districts in four countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal).
- India itself accounts for half the global burden of the disease.
- India has missed the 2017 deadline for elimination of Kala Azar.
- Elimination is defined as reducing the annual incidence of Kala Azar to less than 1 case per 10,000 people at the subdistrict level.

**Dedicated Freight Corridors**

- Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) project is a broad gauge freight corridor being constructed by the Indian Railways.
- It aims to provide an efficient and reliable transportation system through construction of **six freight corridors** traversing the entire country.
- Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India (DFCCIL) is a special purpose vehicle of the railways which has been entrusted with the job to develop DFCs in the country.
- Ministry of Railways have sanctioned the implementation of Western and Eastern Dedicated freight corridors.
- The commissioning of Western and Eastern DFCs is targeted in phases by 2019/2020.
- **Western DFC** runs from Dadri near Delhi to Jawahar Lal Nehru Port Trust in Mumbai.
- It covers the States of Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra.
- It is funded by World Bank.
- **Eastern DFC** is from Ludhiana in Punjab to Dankuni in West Bengal.
- It covers the States of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.
- It is funded by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).
- All the freight traffic that is currently on the rail routes between Delhi and Mumbai and Delhi and Kolkata would be moved to these corridors in parts to decongest the existing lines.
- **Other DFC** - East-West DFC (Kolkata-Mumbai), North-South DFC (Delhi-Chennai), East Coast DFC (Kharagpur-Vijaywada) and the Southern DFC (Chennai-Goa).

### Ethanol Bio-refineries

- Biofuels are fuels produced directly or indirectly from organic material biomass, including plant materials and animal waste.
- Primary biofuels are organic materials used in an unprocessed form, primarily for heating, cooking or electricity production.
- Ethanol is a secondary biofuel which is produced through processing of biomass.
- **First generation** biofuels are produced directly from food crops.
- **Second Generation (2G)** biofuels are produced from marginal croplands unsuitable for food production.
- Oil PSUs have entered into MoUs with State Governments and Technology Providers for setting up five 2G ethanol bio-refineries.
- In 2016, the foundation stone of India’s first 2G ethanol bio-refinery in Bathinda, Punjab has been laid.
- In the National Policy on Biofuels 2018, Government has allowed B grade heavy molasses, sugarcane juice and damaged food grains as feedstocks to increase availability of ethanol.

### New Nuclear Plants in India

- At present, there are 9 nuclear power reactors at various stages of construction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>Kakrapar (2 reactors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>Rawatbhata (2 reactors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>Kudankulam (2 reactors)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- There are 12 nuclear power reactors accorded administrative approval and financial sanction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Location (Each 2 reactors)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>Gorakhpur</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>Mahi-Banswara</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karnataka</td>
<td>Kaiga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>Chutka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Nadu</td>
<td>Kudankulam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Government has also accorded in principle approval for setting up more reactors in future. They are,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Collaboration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>Jaitapur</td>
<td>France</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>Kovvada</td>
<td>USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>Chhaya Mithi Virdi</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>Haripur</td>
<td>Russia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Myanmar Joins ISA

- Myanmar has recently joined the India-initiated International Solar Alliance (ISA), becoming its 68th member.
- International Solar Alliance was launched by India and France at the Paris climate summit in 2015.
- It is open to all 121 prospective member countries falling between the Tropics of Cancer and Capricorn.
- Click here to know more about ISA.

Source: The Hindu, PIB

27-07-2018

Institutes of Eminence

- Institutes of Eminence are institutions which are expected to make into top 500 world rankings in a decade.
- They have complete freedom to decide the curricula, hire domestic and foreign faculty and fix a fee structure of their choice.
- It comprise 10 public and 10 private educational institutions which will be selected based on the recommendations of Empowered committee.
- The Government has recently shortlisted 6 Institutes of Eminence (IoEs) including 3 from Public Sector and 3 from Private Sector.
- **Public Sector** - Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, IIT Bombay and IIT, Delhi.
- **Private Sector** - Jio Institute (Reliance Foundation), Pune, Birla Institute of Technology & Sciences, Pilani, Rajasthan; and Manipal Academy of Higher Education, Manipal, Karnataka.
● **Recent development** - Union HRD ministry has recently clarified in the Parliament session that Rs. 1000 cr. grant will be given only to public institutions and no funds will be given to private institutions.

● **Other Benefits** - These Institutions shall be provided with greater autonomy
   1. to admit foreign students up to 30% of admitted students;
   2. to recruit foreign faculty upto 25% of faculty strength;
   3. to offer online courses upto 20% of its programmes;
   4. to enter into academic collaboration with top 500 in the world ranking Institutions without permission of UGC;
   5. free to fix and charge fees from foreign students without restriction;
   6. flexibility of course structure in terms of number of credit hours and years to take a degree;
   7. complete flexibility in fixing of curriculum and syllabus, among others.

**Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme**

● It is a centrally sponsored scheme which aims to empower rural women through community participation.

● Under the scheme, community engagement through student volunteers is envisioned in the backward districts at block level.

● Student volunteers will help in awareness generation regarding various important government programmes as well as social issues.

● It is envisioned in 115 aspirational districts as part of the Block Level initiatives.

● Improving the child sex ratio, survival of new born girl child, girl education and empower them through several initiatives are the main motives.

● It is implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development under umbrella mission for “Protection and Empowerment for Women”.

● The duration of the scheme is from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

● The cost sharing ratio of 60:40 between centre and states except for North East and Special Category States where the ratio is 90:10.

**National Achievement Survey**
- National Achievement Survey is conducted by National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT).
- The survey focuses on assessing the learning levels of the students in Classes 3, 5, 8 and 10.
- The Learning Outcomes for each class in Languages (Hindi, English and Urdu), Mathematics, Environmental Studies, Science and Social Science has been set under RTE Act, 2009.
- The ambit of the survey includes school leaders, teachers and officials at the Cluster, Block, District Institute of Education and Training (DIET), State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) and the Directorates of Education in the different States/ UTs.

**Banganga River**

- Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has accorded in principle approval for inter-state high level bridge on the Banganga river.
- Banganga River originates from the Aravalli hills, near Bairath in Jaipur and drains into Yamuna.
- Ramgarh dam has been constructed across the river in Jaipur.
- The main tributaries are Gumti Nalla and Suri River, joining the river on its right bank, and Sanwan and Palasan Rivers, meeting the river on its left bank.
- Its basin extends over parts of Alwar, Jaipur, Dausa, Sawai Madhopur and Bharatpur Districts.
- Its eastern edge borders the Yamuna River Basin in Uttar Pradesh.
- The inter-state high level bridge is proposed on the Sakdi-Dangorali route in Balaghat district of Madhya Pradesh.
India-UK Science & Innovation Council

- The 6th India-UK Science & Innovation Council (SIC) meeting was recently held in New Delhi.
- The objective is to address challenges, such as water pollution, life-threatening diseases and climate change.
- India also pitched for collaboration between Council of Scientific & Industrial Research, CSIR, and its UK equivalent to expand cooperation.
- India and UK are jointly delivering cutting edge science and Technology solutions to societal challenges through Newton Bhabha partnership.

Innovate India Platform
The platform is a collaboration between the Atal Innovation Mission of NITI Aayog and MyGov, a citizen centric platform of the Government of India.

It will serve as the common point for all the innovation happening across the nation.

Through the Innovate India portal, users can view, comment, share, and rate the innovations crowdsourced on the Innovate India platform.

It provides for registering both grassroots and deep-tech innovators at a national level.

**Atal Innovation Mission**

- The mission aims at creating an Innovation Promotion Platform to foster a culture of innovation, R&D in India.
- It is the brainchild of NITI Aayog.
- Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) are established in 900 schools under the mission to spur the spark of creativity, and go beyond regular curriculum and text book learning.
- ATLs are play workspaces fitted with state-of-the-art technologies like 3D printers, robotics, sensor technology kits, Internet of things (IoT), miniaturised electronics.

**Source: The Hindu, PIB.**

28-07-2018

**World Hepatitis Day**

- World Hepatitis Day takes place every year on 28 July, with the aim of bringing the world together in order to raise awareness of viral hepatitis.
- The theme for World Hepatitis Day 2018 is “Eliminate Hepatitis”.
- Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver caused by blood borne Hepatitis Virus.
There are 5 main hepatitis viruses, referred to as types A, B, C, D and E.

The most common modes of infection are through exposure to contaminated blood or blood products and invasive medical procedures using contaminated equipments.

It can also be transmitted sexually and be passed from an infected mother to her baby.

Viral hepatitis B and C are root causes of liver cancer, leading to 1.34 million deaths every year.

Currently, there is no vaccine for hepatitis C; except Hepatitis C, all other hepatitis viruses have safe and effective vaccination to prevent them.

Hepatitis B is included in India’s Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP).

According to the WHO’s Global Strategy of Viral Hepatitis, the goal to eliminate Hepatitis B and C should be achieved by 2030.

**Mission Satyanishtha**

- Indian Railways has launched the mission Satyanishtha.
- It aims at sensitizing all railway employees about the need to adhere to good ethics and to maintain high standards of integrity at work.
- It is the first ever such mission by any government organisation.
- The objectives of the Mission are
  1. To train every employee to understand the need and value of ethics in Personal and Public life.
  2. To deal with ethical dilemmas in life and Public Governance.
  3. To help understand the policies of Indian Railways on ethics and integrity and the employee’s role in upholding the same.
  4. To develop inner governance through tapping inner resources.

**Sagittarius A**

- It is believed to be a super massive black hole in the Milky Way Galaxy.
- It is 4 million times heavier than sun.
- The gravity produced by it is so intense that stars many times more massive than our sun orbit around it at incredible speeds.
• One of the stars, called S2, recently passed by the black hole at a speed of nearly 3% of the speed of light.
• The passerby of the S2 was observed by Very Large Telescope of European Space Agency.
• It proved Albert Einstein’s general theory of relativity is correct.
• Einstein predicted that when light (such as the light emitted from S2) passed so close to such a powerful source of gravity, it would lose some of its energy.
• In a way, the light has to struggle to move through the field of intense gravity.
• The light form S2 star has shown that it does lose some of its energy during its passage around the Black Hole.

**Very Large Telescope**

• It is the world's most advanced ground based visible-light astronomical observatory.
• It is operated by European Southern Observatory.
• It is located on the mountain Cerro Paranal in **Chile** and consisting of four telescopes with mirrors.
• These telescopes can operate individually or together as an interferometer.
• The large telescopes are named Antu, Kueyen, Melipal, and Yepun, which are the names for the Sun, the Moon, the Southern Cross, and Venus in the language of the Mapuche people.

**Modern Fishing Harbour**

• The Andhra Pradesh government has decided to construct a modern fishing harbour at **Pudimadaka**, about 50 km from Vishakapatnam.
• The Central Institute of Coastal Engineering for Fishery (CICEF), Bengaluru, is preparing a detailed project report.
• It is the State government’s initiative to encourage organised fishery and improve the livelihood of traditional fishermen.

**Turnitin**
• It is the software to detect plagiarism (Stealing and publication of another author's ideas or expressions) in research.
• Union Human Resource Development Minister has recently asserted that this software will be provided to all universities free of cost.

**India and WMO**

• India has been designated as a nodal centre for preparing flash-flood forecasts by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).
• India will develop a customised model that can issue advance warning of floods in Vietnam, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand.
• The system is called the **Flash Flood Guidance System** which aims to provide forecasts six hours in advance.
• The WMO says flash floods account for 85% of flooding incidents across the world, causing some 5,000 deaths each year.

**World Meteorological Organisation**

• WMO was created in 1950 as an intergovernmental organization.
• It became a specialized agency of the United Nations, in 1951, for meteorology (weather and climate), operational hydrology and related geophysical sciences.
• It is the UN system’s authoritative voice on weather, climate and water.
• Its secretariat is located in Geneva, Switzerland and is headed by the Secretary-General.
• Through its members, WMO provides forecasts and early warnings to nations, which help prevent and mitigate disasters.
• It WMO monitors and forecast the transport of chemical and oil spills, forest fires, volcanic ash, haze and nuclear isotopes.
• It also draws world attention to the depletion of the ozone layer.

**Source: The Hindu, PIB**
The West Bengal Assembly recently passed a resolution to change the name of the State as ‘Bangla’ in three languages - Bengali, English and Hindi.

The proposal has been pending since August 2016, but the Centre rejected the proposal of having 3 names in 3 different languages.

Upon the fresh proposal to Union Home ministry by state, the ministry will prepare a note for the union cabinet for an amendment to the Schedule 1 of the Constitution.

Thereafter, a Constitution Amendment Bill will be introduced in Parliament, which has to approve it with a simple majority, before the President gives his assent to it.

According to the Indian Constitution, the power of changing the name of the State lies with the Centre.

The Article 3 of the Constitution deals with the formation of new States and alteration of areas, boundaries or names of existing States.

It says that Parliament may by law,

1. form a new State by separation of territory from any State or by uniting two or more States or parts of States or by uniting any territory to a part of any State;
2. increase the area of any State;
3. diminish the area of any State;
4. alter the boundaries of any State;
5. alter the name of any State;

SEBI has recently proposed allowing investors to use the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) while bidding for shares in initial public offerings.
• UPI is a payment system through which investors can link more than one bank account in their smartphone app and make fund transfers instantly without having to provide IFSC code or account number.

• An investor will only have to use a virtual address, known as a Virtual Payment Address (VPA), which is like email ID, to carry out the transaction.

• VPA is an identifier that is created by the user by linking his bank account to the mobile payment application.

• UPI, which was developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), is regulated by the RBI.

• Some of the UPI apps available are BHIM, PhonePe and Google Tez.

**National Culture Fund (NCF)**

• The fund endeavours to preserve and promote our precious tangible and Intangible heritage in partnership with the community.

• The fund was created as a trust in 1996 by the Ministry of HRD, Department of Culture under the Charitable Endowments Act, 1890.

• It is managed and administered by a council, which is chaired by the Union Minister of Tourism & Culture.

• The council will decide the policies and the executive committee will actualize the policies.

• Funds collected as part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) for development works at selected monuments is directed through NCF.

• Union Culture minister has recently asserted in the parliament that about Rs. 904.80 Lakhs received as part of CSR under NCF for development works at historic Monuments in last 3 yrs.

**Earth Overshoot day**

• Earth Overshoot Day (EOD) means the day when human consumption exceeds the earth’s capacity in that particular year to regenerate natural resources.

• It is the day the world completely consumes all the natural resources produced that year.

• It is calculated by Global Footprint Network.
• World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the world’s largest conservation organization, has participated in Earth Overshoot Day since 2007.
• Earth Overshoot Day falls on 1 August this year.
• Since 1987, the EOD has been moving up the calendar, from December 19 in 1987 to August 1, 2018.

Global Footprint Network

• Global Footprint Network, founded in 2003, is an independent think tank originally based in the United States, Belgium and Switzerland.
• It is headquartered in Oakland, California.
• Its mission is to help end ecological overshoot by making ecological limits central to decision-making.
• Every year, it produces National Footprint Accounts, which calculate Ecological Footprint and bio capacity of more than 200 countries.

Source: The Hindu, PIB, BusinessLine
Deep Ocean Mission

- The Central government has drawn up a 5-year plan to explore the deep ocean.
- Ministry of Earth Sciences has been tasked with coordinating the exercise.
- The ministry has recently unveiled the blueprint of "Deep Ocean Mission".
- The mission proposes to explore the deep ocean similar to the space exploration started by ISRO about 35 years ago.
- The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) allotted to India (2.2 million sq.km) in the international waters will be covered under this mission.
- The focus will be on technologies for deep-sea mining, underwater vehicles, underwater robotics and ocean climate change advisory services.
- Under this mission, the key deliverables are
  i. Offshore desalination plant that will work with tidal energy, and
  ii. Developing a submersible vehicle that can go to a depth of at least 6,000 metres with three people on board.

India and Central Indian Ocean Basin

- India has exclusive right to explore deep sea mineral - polymetallic nodules from seabed in Central Indian Ocean Basin.
- A long–term Polymetallic Nodules programme is being implemented by the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- This right in the international water is allocated by International Seabed Authority (ISA).
- ISA is a UN body set up to regulate the exploration and exploitation of marine non-living resources of oceans in international waters.
- It is headquartered at Kingston, Jamaica.
- In 2016, India was re-elected as a member of Council of ISA.
National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System

- India is planning to procure National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (NASAM - II) from U.S.
- It is an advanced air defence system.
- It is the state-of-the-art defense system that has ability to quickly identify and destroy enemy aircraft, UAV or emerging cruise missile threats.
- NASAMS-II is an upgraded version of the NASAMS and features new 3D mobile surveillance radars and 12 missile launchers for quicker reaction.
- It is proposed to be deployed to protect national capital region.
- It will help in preventing 9/11-type attacks in Delhi.

Advanced Air Defence systems in India

- India is deploying a multi-tiered air defence network to fully secure its airspace from incoming fighter aircraft, missiles and UAV.
- An indigenous two tired defence shield known as "Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD)", to destroy enemy ballistic missiles is being developed.
- The BMD consists of two interceptor missiles,
  i. The Prithvi Defence Vehicle (PDV) for exo-atmospheric (high) altitudes of 50–80 km and
  ii. The Advanced Area Defence (AAD) missile for endo-atmosphere (low) altitudes of 15-30 kilometers.
- India is also in an advanced stage of talks with Russia for the procurement of very long range S-400 air defence systems.

Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS)

- TESS is NASA's latest satellite to search for planets outside our solar system, known as exoplanets.
- The mission will spend the next two years monitoring the nearest and brightest stars for "Transits".
- Transits are events which denote a periodic dips in light of the star when a planet pass in front of it.
- It was launched in April this year and it has now started its search for planets around nearby stars.
- It is expected to transmit its first series of science data back to Earth in August, and thereafter periodically every 13.5 days.
- It is the next step in the search for planets outside of our solar system, including those that could support life.

**National Skill Training Institute (NSTI) for Women**

- A permanent campus of National Skill Training Institute (NSTI) for Women is going to be built at Mohali, Punjab.
- This is the first NSTI Institute for Punjab and only one of its kind in India which is exclusively for women.
- It is launched under "Skill India" Mission.

**Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendra (PMKK)**

- PMKK is established by National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) across India.
- It aims to provide skill training for unemployed youth through its short-term training (STT) module and contribute to the capacity building of municipal employees through Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) program.
- PMKK for differently abled person is going to be launched in Mohali.
- It is also a first of its kind in India.

**FASTag**

- A FASTag is a reloadable tag that automatically deducts toll charges and allows a vehicle to pass through a toll gate without stopping for the payment.
- It uses radio frequency identification (RFID) technology to make cashless payments through a prepaid account linked to it.
- The tag is fixed to the windscreen of a vehicle and an RFID antenna in the canopy of the toll gate scans the QR code and lifts the barrier to allow a vehicle to pass through.
- The tag is valid for five years.
- It is coded in 7 different colors, each is assigned to a particular category of vehicles.
- It is mandatory for cars and trucks sold after December 1, 2017 to be fitted with a FASTag.
- Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has also proposed to make FASTag compulsory for all commercial vehicles seeking a national permit.
- National Highway Authority of India (NHAI) has a mobile application for FASTag that allows users to buy and recharge these tags as well as seek information on toll rates on different routes.
- It also allows the cab operators to track the movement of their vehicles as they receive SMS alerts.
- Users are refunded 5% of the total toll paid by them in a given month.

**Source: The Hindu, PIB**

**31-07-2018**

**Idukki Dam**

- Idukki dam in kerala is constructed across the Periyar river, the longest river in kerala.
- It is one of the highest arch dams in the continent, measuring 550ft in height.
- It was commissioned in the year 1973 with financial aid from Canada.
- It is built between two granite hills such as Kuravanmala and kuravathimala.
- It is owned by the Kerala State Electricity Board.
- It supports a hydroelectric power station in Moolamattom.
- The hydel project is receiving water from two other dams at Cheruthoni and Kulamavu.
The water levels in the reservoir are rising at an alarming rate as a result of the record high rains Kerala has received this monsoon. It has prompted authorities in Kerala to issue an "Orange Alert" - a precautionary message to the public in light of the possibility of water release from the reservoir. The dam is going to be reopened after 26 years. Previous opening was in 1981 and 1992.

Strategic Partnership Model

- The Defence Ministry has recently approved key guidelines for implementation of Strategic Partnership model.
- The guidelines were approved by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), the ministry's highest decision-making body.
- Under this model, select private firms will be roped in to build military platforms like submarines and fighter jets in India in partnership with foreign entities.
It aims to create a vibrant defence manufacturing ecosystem in the country through joint ventures between Indian corporates and global defence majors.

All procurements under the SP Model would be executed by specially constituted Empowered Project Committees (EPC).

It is to provide focused attention and ensure timely execution.

**Additional Surveillance Measures**

- Additional Surveillance Measures (ASM) was introduced recently by SEBI.
- It is a surveillance method in which SEBI impose trading curbs on excessively volatile stocks in the Indian market.
- For example, if the "Spread" - Price variation of a stock between the high and low price, in the last three months is 200 per cent or more, then it will be placed under ASM.
- Once a stock is caught in the ASM net, it attracts a bunch of stricter exchange rules on intra-day price movements.
- Such curbs discourage speculators and intra-day traders from taking heavy positions in stocks and will result in stock prices to drop.
- Stocks of PSUs, securities with derivative products and stocks under **Graded Surveillance Measure** are exempted from ASM net.

**Graded Surveillance Measure**

- Graded Surveillance Measure, designed by SEBI, is to keep a tab on securities that witness an abnormal price rise, which is not commensurate with financial health and fundamentals of the company.
- The underlying principle is to alert and protect small / retail investors from getting stuck in such stocks inadvertently on some wrong advice.
- Currently, more than 900 companies are monitored under this.
- Once a firm is identified for surveillance it goes through six stages.
- In the first stage the securities are put in the trade-to-trade segment i.e no speculative trading is allowed and delivery of shares and payment of consideration amount are mandatory.
- A maximum of 5% movement in share price is allowed.
- With subsequent stages, corresponding surveillance actions and the restrictions gets higher progressively.
- In the sixth and final stage, there are maximum restrictions.
- Trading is permitted only once a month at this stage, with no upward movement allowed in price. Also, the additional surveillance deposit would be 200%.
- There would a quarterly review of securities.
- Based on criteria, the securities would be moved from a higher stage to a lower stage in a sequential manner.

**Nepal-India Think Tank Summit**

- The first ever Nepal-India Think Tank Summit is going to begin in Kathmandu.
- It is being jointly organized by the Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs and Nehru Memorial Museum Library
- It aims to foster greater collaboration and knowledge-sharing among the think tanks of the two countries.
- The summit is proposed to become an annual feature for the participating organisations and it will be hosted alternatively in Nepal and India.

**Lombok**

- It is a part of Indonesian group of Islands and located to the east of Bali.
- An earthquake of 6.4 magnitude has recently struck the island and triggered landslides in a volcano Mt. Rinjani.
- The volcano, which rises 3,726m (12,224ft) above sea level and is the second-highest one in Indonesia.
- Indonesia is prone to earthquakes because it lies on the "Ring of Fire".
- Ring of Fire is the line of frequent quakes and volcanic eruptions that circles virtually the entire Pacific rim.
Source: The Hindu, BusinessLine