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Current Affairs



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BIMAL JALAN COMMITTEE

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) at its board meeting decided to transfer a whopping ₹1.76 lakh crore to the Centre — including *interim dividend* of ₹28,000 crore paid in February — which is likely to address the precarious fiscal situation of the government to a great extent.

The RBI, in consultation with the Government of India, had constituted an Expert Committee to Review the *Extant Economic Capital Framework* of the Reserve Bank of India (Chairman: Dr. Bimal Jalan).

1. The committee recommended that the RBI maintain a Contingent Risk Buffer — which mostly comes from the CF — of between 5.5-6.5% of the central bank's balance sheet. Since the latest CF amount was about 6.8% of the RBI's balance sheet, the excess amount was to be transferred to the government.
2. The committee also decided, for the year under consideration, to use the lower limit of 5.5% of the range it recommended.
3. So, basically, whatever was excess of 5.5% of the RBI's assets in the CF was to be transferred. That amount was ₹52,637 crore. Regarding the RBI's economic capital levels — which is essentially the CGRA — the committee recommended keeping them in the range of 20-24.5% of the balance sheet.
4. Since it stood at 23.3% as of June 2019, the committee felt that there was no need to add more to it, and so the full net income of the RBI — a whopping ₹1,23,414 crore — should be transferred to the Centre.
5. That ₹1.23 lakh crore plus the ₹52,637 crore is what comprises the ₹1.76 lakh crore that the RBI has decided to transfer to the government.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF RBI FUNDS?

The central bank has four different funds that together comprise its reserves. These are:

1. the Currency and Gold Revaluation Account (CGRA)
2. the Contingency Fund (CF) the investment revaluation account and
3. the Asset Development Fund (ADF)
4. Of these, the CGRA is by far the largest and makes up the significant bulk of the RBI's reserves.

GENERALIZED SYSTEM OF PREFERENCES

1. Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) is a preferential tariff system extended by developed countries (donor countries) to developing countries (beneficiary countries).
2. It involves reduced Most Favoured Nation Tariffs or duty-free entry of eligible products exported by beneficiary countries to the markets of donor countries.
3. The Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) was instituted in 1971 under the aegis of United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).
4. The objective of UNCTAD's support on GSP and other preferential arrangements is to help developing countries - particularly LDCs - to increase utilization of GSP and other trade preferences and in turn promote productive capacity development and increased trade.
5. The primary objective of the Generalized System of Preference is to contribute to the reduction of poverty and the promotion of sustainable development and good governance.

6. Tariff preferences in the developed markets enable Developing Countries to participate more fully in international trade and generate additional export revenue to support implementation of their own sustainable development and poverty reduction policy strategies.
7. GSP is presently extended by about 28 developed countries (Recently, U.S. has ended this status for India).

CHIPPIPARAI

An aquiline snout, a slender and streamlined body with long legs and the tail extending like a snake, Chippiparai, the native breed of dog from Southern Tamil Nadu, is an ace runner and hunter.

Even though their prominence faded with the advent of exotic breeds, there is a growing interest in local breeds now and the Veterinary College and Research Institute, Tirunelveli, has embarked on creating a database of the Chippiparai, which has already gained distinction as a universal donor of canine blood.

PROJECT SURE

1. The Union Minister for Textiles has launched Project SURE. The SURE project is a commitment by India's apparel industry to set a sustainable pathway for the Indian fashion industry.
2. SURE stands for 'Sustainable Resolution' which means a commitment from the industry to move towards fashion that contributes to a clean environment.
3. This framework would help the industry
 - (a) reduce its carbon emissions
 - (b) increase resource efficiency
 - (c) tackle waste and water management
 - (d) create positive social impact to achieve long-term sustainability targets.

CENTRE FORMS PANEL ON POWER REFORMS

The Central government has formed a panel headed by *Sanjiv Nandan Sahai*, Special Power Secretary on power reforms. The panel will recommend measures required to be made in the Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) and for increasing competitiveness in the power markets.

1. PPA is a contract between the one who generates electricity and one which is looking to purchase it.
2. PPA defines all of the commercial terms for the sale of electricity between the two parties such as
 - (a) when the project will begin commercial operation
 - (b) schedule for delivery of electricity
 - (c) penalties for under delivery
 - (d) payment terms
 - (e) termination.
3. The Power Sector has witnessed a huge growth in terms of capacity addition during the last few years. But it is reeling under stress as the mismatch in demand and supply has led to stressed power assets or non-performing assets (NPAs).

4. According to the 37th Standing Committee On Energy report, about 34 power plants in the country amount to about ₹1.40 lakh crore NPAs.
5. The debt has increased due to several factors such as
 - (a) capacity addition without tied-up PPAs with Distribution Companies (DISCOMs)
 - (b) coal supply issues
 - (c) inability of DISCOMs to pay to generators
 - (d) regulatory issues among others.

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (UNCCD)

Recently, the 14th Conference of Parties (COP14) to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) concluded at India Expo Centre & Mart, Greater Noida. India had committed to rejuvenate 50 lakh hectares (5 million) of degraded land between 2021 and 2030.

1. It will be a combination of restoring forest land as well as cultivable land. Analysis
2. This January, India became part of the "**Bonn Challenge**", a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030. The Bonn Challenge was launched in 2011 by the Government of Germany and IUCN. Later, it was endorsed and extended by the New York Declaration on Forests at the 2014 UN Climate Summit.
3. At the UNFCCC Conference of the Parties (COP) 2015 in Paris, India also joined the voluntary Bonn Challenge and pledged to bring into restoration 13 million hectares of degraded and deforested
4. India for the first time hosted the 14th session of the Conference of Parties of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) from September 2 to 13.
5. In the first phase, the pilot project will be conducted in Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Nagaland and Karnataka.
6. The project has been launched in partnership with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
7. It aims to enhance the capacity on forest landscape restoration (FLR) by developing and adapting best practices for sustainable land management and putting into place some monitoring protocols to combat desertification.
8. The project is also part of the Bonn Challenge pledge, which was undertaken by India in 2015, to restore 13 million hectares of degraded and deforested land by 2020, and another 8 million hectares by 2030.
9. This is one of the highest targets among all Asian countries. COP 14

UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (UNCCD)

1. The Convention, the only convention stemming from a direct recommendation of the Conference's Agenda 21, was adopted in Paris in June 1994 and entered into force in December 1996.
2. It is the first and only internationally legally binding framework set up to address the problem of desertification.
3. The Convention addresses specifically the arid, semiarid and dry sub-humid areas, known as the drylands.
4. It now has more than 180 country Parties to the Convention, making it truly global in reach.
5. The UNCCD is particularly committed to a bottom-up approach, encouraging the participation of local people in combating desertification and land degradation.

10. According to India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), submitted under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), India has pledged to create an additional carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.

DRAFT E-COMMERCE NORMS

The Ministry of Consumer Affairs has issued guidelines on e-Commerce for protection of the interests of the consumers.

1. It calls for e-commerce entities to maintain a level playing field and prohibit influencing the price of goods and services directly or indirectly.
2. The draft norms mention that an e-commerce company doing business in the country shall be a registered legal entity under the laws of India.
3. The draft norms further restrict companies from falsely representing themselves as consumers or posting reviews about goods and services in their name.
4. To enable consumers to make 'informed decisions', the consumer affairs ministry has proposed that ecommerce entities should display terms of contract between themselves and the sellers relating to return, refund, exchange, warranty, delivery, mode of payments and grievance redressal mechanism.
5. The draft norms also puts the onus on the companies to ensure advertisements for marketing of goods or services are consistent with the actual characteristics.
6. It provides for protection of 'personally identifiable information of consumers' and outlines that the companies should ensure such data collection, storage and use comply with provisions of the Information Technology (Amendment) Act, 2008.
7. The department for promotion of industry and internal trade's (DPIIT) revised norms on foreign direct investment (FDI) in e-commerce that came into effect on February 1 also adopted a similar approach, barring e-commerce companies from influencing sale price of goods and services.
8. The commerce ministry is already drafting a separate e-commerce policy that proposes regulating crossborder data flows, setting up storage facilities locally and establishing a data authority to devise a framework for sharing data.

INDIA'S CHILD WELL-BEING INDEX

1. Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh and Puducherry topped the charts in the child well-being index, a tool designed to measure and tracks children's well-being comprehensively.
2. Meghalaya, Jharkhand and Madhya Pradesh featured at the bottom, as per a report released by the non-government organisation **World Vision India** and research institute IFMR LEAD.
3. The report is an attempt to look at how India fairs on child well-being using a composite child well-being index.
4. The India child well-being index is a crucial report that can be mined both by the Government and civil organisations to achieve the goal of child well-being.
5. This report provides insights on health, nutrition, education, sanitation and child protection.
6. Focusing on the three key dimensions, 24 indicators were selected to develop the computation of the child well-being index.
7. The report highlights the multi-dimensional approach towards measuring child wellbeing — going beyond mere income poverty.

8. Children have the potential to transform the country, but if neglected, they will exacerbate the burden of poverty and inequality.
9. It is imperative that all stakeholders prioritise and invest in the well-being of our children.

MONTREAL PROTOCOL

The Montreal Protocol, finalized in 1987, is a global agreement to protect the stratospheric ozone layer by phasing out the production and consumption of ozone-depleting substances (ODS).

1. The stratospheric ozone layer filters out harmful ultraviolet radiation, which is associated with an increased prevalence of skin cancer and cataracts, reduced agricultural productivity, and disruption of marine ecosystems.
2. The Montreal Protocol is the first and the only environmental treaty to achieve universal ratification by all countries in the world.

Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol

1. In October 2016, Parties to the Montreal Protocol adopted the Kigali amendment to phase down production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) worldwide.
2. Nations that ratify the Kigali Amendment are committing to cutting the projected production and consumption of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) by more than 80 percent.
3. HFCs are widely used alternatives to ozone depleting substances such as hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) and chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), already controlled under the Protocol.
4. The world can avoid up to 0.4°C of global warming this century through implementation of the Kigali Amendment.

GLOBAL COOLING INNOVATION SUMMIT

1. A first-of-its-kind Global Cooling Innovation Summit was inaugurated in New Delhi in November 2018.
2. It seeks to explore concrete means and pathways to address the climate threat that comes from the growing demand from room air conditioners.
3. The Global Cooling Prize was launched at this Summit.

STAR TORTOISE, OTTERS GET HIGHER PROTECTION AT CITES

India's proposal to upgrade the protection of star tortoises, the smooth-coated otter and small-clawed otters in CITES (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species on Wild Fauna and Flora) have been approved.

1. These species have been listed under Appendix I of CITES.
2. There will be a complete international ban enforced on their trade.
3. Appendix I includes species threatened with extinction.
4. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances.
5. Appendix II includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival.

CITES

CITES was drafted after a resolution was adopted at a meeting of the members of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in 1963. The text of the Convention was agreed at a meeting in Washington, DC in 1973; the Convention. The Convention is therefore sometimes referred to as the Washington Convention. CITES entered into force in 1975. At present it has 183 countries.

6. Appendix III contains species that are protected in at least one country, which has asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade.
7. Indian Star Tortoise Smooth-coated Otter and small clawed otter are listed as Vulnerable in the IUCN Red list.

SAMUDRAYAAN

1. The 'Samudrayaan' is a part of the **Ministry of Earth Sciences'** pilot project for deep ocean mining for rare minerals.
2. The project proposes to send a submersible vehicle with three persons to a depth of about 6000 metres to carry out deep underwater studies.
3. The project is being undertaken by **National Institute of Ocean Technology**. Recently, the Indian government has given approval to the Deep Ocean Mission (DOM).
4. The mission proposes to explore Deep Ocean similar to space exploration started by ISRO.
5. Key areas of the mission are:
 - a) Deep-sea mining: exploitation of polymetallic nodules(PMN)
 - b) Ocean climate change advisory services
 - c) Underwater vehicles
 - d) Underwater robotics related technologies
6. Two key projects have been planned under the Mission: Desalination plant powered by tidal energy, Submersible vehicle equipped to explore depths of at least 6,000 metres.

7 STAR RAINBOW SCHEME

The 7-Star Rainbow Scheme was launched by Haryana state government in 2018.

1. It focuses on incentivising and encourage the working of Gram Panchayats in Haryana.
2. Under the scheme, the gram Panchayats are assessed on seven parameters which are recognised with a star, with a specific colour.
3. The different parameters are:
 - a) Sex Ratio (pink)
 - b) Education and No dropouts (Sky Blue)
 - c) Hygiene and Sanitation (White)
 - d) Peace and Harmony (Saffron)
 - e) Environment preservation (Green)
 - f) Good Governance (Golden)
 - g) Social Participation (Silver)

URANIUM CONTAMINATION

The Andhra Pradesh government has ordered a full-fledged inquiry into a number of complaints about groundwater pollution caused by the uranium mining at Tummalapalle in Vemula mandal of Kadapa district.

1. Uranium is a naturally occurring radioactive metal that occurs in low concentrations in nature.

URANIUM BANK

1. The International Atomic Energy Agency opened a uranium bank in Kazakhstan
2. The Low Enriched Uranium (LEU) Bank in the city of Oskemen, in eastern Kazakhstan, will store up to 90 tonnes of the fuel, and sell it to IAEA members if they are unable to procure it elsewhere.
3. The LEU Bank will serve as a last-resort mechanism to provide confidence to countries that they will be able to obtain LEU for the manufacture of fuel for nuclear power plants in the event of an unforeseen, non-commercial disruption to their supplies.

2. It is present in certain types of soils and rocks, especially granites.
3. Uranium can also be found in the environment as a result of human activities such as combustion of coal and other fuels.
4. Bathing and showering with water that contains uranium is not considered a health concern.
5. A few small animal and human studies have found that the heavy metal damages the kidneys. The studies indicate that this is a chemical effect, rather than a radiological one, even though uranium is radioactive.
6. As the Bureau of Indian Standards does not specify a norm for uranium level, water is not tested regularly for it.
7. In Rajasthan and other northwestern regions, uranium occurs mostly in alluvial aquifers; while in southern regions such as Telangana, crystalline rocks such as granite seem to be the source.

URANIUM DEPOSITS OF INDIA

1. Jaduguda in Singhbhum Thrust Belt (in the state of Jharkhand) is the first uranium deposit to be discovered in the country in 1951.
2. Jaduguda is the first mine in the country to produce uranium ore in a commercial scale.
3. Bhatin, Narwapahar and Turamdih are well known uranium mines of the country.
4. Apart from discoveries in the Singhbhum Thrust Belt, several uranium occurrences have also been found in Cuddapah/Kadapa basin of Andhra Pradesh.
5. In the Mahadek basin of Meghalaya in North-eastern part of the country, sandstone type uranium deposits provide near-surface flat ore bodies amenable to commercial operations.
6. Other areas in Rajasthan, Karnataka and Chattisgarh hold promise for developing into some major deposits.
7. The Tumulpalli deposit is considered to be one of the largest deposits of uranium in the world.
8. India currently imports uranium from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Canada and plans to also purchase the fuel from Australia.

MERGER OF PUBLIC SECTOR BANKS

1. 10 public sector banks have been merged into four entities.
2. The Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Acts of 1970 and 1980 provide that the Central Government, in consultation with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), may make a scheme, inter alia, for the amalgamation of any nationalised bank with any other nationalised bank or any other banking institution.
3. Various committees, including Narasimhan Committee (1998) constituted by RBI, Leeladhar Committee (2008) chaired by RBI Deputy Governor, and Nayak Committee (2014) constituted by RBI, have recommended consolidation of Public Sector Banks (PSBs) given underlying benefits/synergies.
4. Following all these mergers, the country will have a total of 12 public sector banks, half of which—Punjab National Bank, Canara Bank, Union Bank of India, Indian Bank, State Bank of India, and Bank of Baroda—will be able to compete at a global level.
5. Previously, the government has already merged State Bank of India with its affiliate banks, and Bank of Baroda with Vijaya Bank and Dena Bank.
6. Apart from the mergers, the Finance Minister also announced a number of smaller reforms to the boards of the banks that are aimed at improving their efficiency and accountability.

7. In order to make the management accountable to the boards of the banks, a board committee would be made in charge of appraising the performance of officers of the rank of general managers and above, including the managing director.

INDIA'S GDP

1. India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate slowed to a six-year low of 5% in the first quarter (April to June) of the 2019-20 financial year.
2. Recently, India dropped two places in GDP rankings in 2018 compared to 2017. In 2018, India's economy grew by about 3%, but in the same period, the U.K. and France grew by about 7% each, pushing India to the 7th place in the World Bank's GDP rankings in 2018.
3. Now the world's largest economies in terms of GDP (nominal) in decreasing order are: US, China, Japan, Germany, U.K., France, India, Italy, Brazil and Canada.
4. Government aims to make India a \$5-trillion economy by 2024.

REAL VS NOMINAL GDP

1. If we use current prices of goods and services to calculate GDP, we get Nominal GDP.
2. But, to get real GDP we use the prices in the base year. The base year for India is 2011-12.
3. Real GDP is also known as GDP at constant prices.
4. It is calculated to eliminate the effect of price rise in GDP.
5. In short, Real GDP is Nominal GDP adjusted for inflation.

GDP Vs GVA

1. Gross domestic product (GDP) is the monetary value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period.
2. GVA provides the rupee value for the amount of goods and services produced in an economy after deducting the cost of inputs and raw materials that have gone into the production of those goods and services.
3. It also gives sector-specific picture like what is the growth in an area, industry or sector of an economy.
4. At the macro level, it is the sum of a country's GDP and net of subsidies and taxes in the economy.
5. While GVA gives a picture of the state of economic activity from the producers' side or supply side, the GDP model gives the picture from the consumers' side or demand perspective.
6. **Gross value added = GDP + subsidies on products - taxes on products.**
7. The Reserve Bank has recently switched back to the gross domestic product (GDP)-based measure to offer its growth estimates from the gross value added (GVA) methodology, citing global best practices.
8. The government had started analysing growth estimates using GVA methodology from January 2015 and had also changed the base year to 2018 from January.
9. Globally, the performance of most economies is gauged in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

GDP (PPP)

1. PPP basis arguably more useful when comparing differences in living standards between nations.

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2. **PPP** (Purchasing Power Parity) is an exchange rate at which the currency of one country is converted into that of the second country in order to purchase the same volume of goods and services in both countries.
3. If a hamburger is selling in London for £2 and in New York for \$4, this would imply a PPP exchange rate of 1 pound to 2 U.S. dollars.
4. Nominal and PPP are identical in the US, because USD is used as the benchmark.
5. In GDP (PPP), India is the third largest economy after China and US and is followed by Japan, Germany, Russia, Indonesia, Brazil, UK and France.

SAHARIA TRIBE AND TB

1. **Saharia** is a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG) in Madhya Pradesh.
2. TB prevalence among Saharias is 1,995 per 1,00,000 persons as against a national average of 204.
3. Malnutrition, poor housing, alcoholism and seasonal migration continue to be risk factors.
4. While the World Health Organization has set 2035 as the deadline to eliminate the TB epidemic, India, which accounts for a quarter of cases, plans to do so much ahead by 2025.

In 1973, the Dhebar Commission created Primitive Tribal Groups (PTGs) as a separate category, who are less developed among the tribal groups. 75 tribal groups have been categorized by Ministry of Home Affairs as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs). PVTGs reside in 18 States and UT of A&N Islands.

PVTGs have some basic characteristics - they are mostly homogenous, with a small population, relatively physically isolated, social institutes cast in a simple mould, absence of written language, relatively simple technology and a slower rate of change etc.

MT. KUN

The Indian Army recently conducted a mountaineering expedition to Mt. Kun. The second-highest peak in between the Zaskar and Kargil regions of Ladakh. It is a part of the Nun Kun mountain massif in the Himalayas. Nun (7135 m) is the highest peak in the part of the Himalayan range lying on the Indian side of the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir.

T. N. MANOHARAN TASK FORCE

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has released the "Report of the Task Force on the Development of Secondary Market for Corporate Loans" for comments. Key recommendations of the Task Force are as follows:

1. Setting up of a Self-Regulatory Body of participants
2. Finalise detailed modalities for the secondary market for corporate loans including standardisation of documentation
3. Setting up a Central Loan Contract Registry
4. Setting up an online loan sales platform to conduct auctions
5. Amending the extant regulations applicable to securitization and assignment of loans, asset reconstruction, Foreign Portfolio Investment and External Commercial Borrowings
6. Amendments in regulations.

TIGERS AT HIGH ALTITUDE

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The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has released a report on Status of Tiger Habitats in high altitude ecosystems.

1. Led by the Global Tiger Forum with Bhutan, India, Nepal & WWF
2. Supported by the Integrated Tiger Habitat Conservation Programme of IUCN
3. Report reveals that high altitude compatible for the tiger growth.
4. Global Tiger Forum (GTF)-only inter- governmental international body to protect the remaining 5 sub-species of Tigers distributed over 13 Tiger Range countries of the world.
5. Formed in 1993
6. 1997 became an independent organization
7. Secretariat: New Delhi.

JAPAN-INDIA ANNUAL DEFENCE MINISTERIAL DIALOGUE

The Defence Minister of India paid a visit to Japan for the annual Defence Ministerial Meeting between the 2 countries. Key highlights of the meeting:

1. first Foreign and Defence Ministerial Dialogue (2+2) ahead of the Japan-India Annual Summit this year.
2. Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) shown progress
3. exchanges between the Acquisition, Technology and Logistics Agency (ATLA) and the Department of Defence Production (DDP) have been actively held to cooperate in Defence Equipment and Technology.
4. Bilateral exercises: Dharma Guardian between Japan and Indian Army
5. Japan-India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX)
6. Japan-India-U.S. trilateral maritime exercise "MALABAR 2019"
7. SHINYUU MAITRI 18 between Japan and Indian Air Force.

YUDH ABHYAS – 2019

Exercise Yudh Abhyas - 2019 is a joint military training between the armed forces of India and USA. It took place at Joint Base Lewis Mc Chord, Washington, USA.

This is the 15th edition of the joint exercise hosted alternately between the two countries.

GLOBAL LIVEABILITY INDEX

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) released the Global Liveability Index 2019, ranks 140 global cities based on their living conditions.

1. It quantifies the challenges that might be presented to an individual's lifestyle in 140 cities worldwide, and assesses which locations provide the best living conditions
2. List topped by Vienna (Austria) for the second consecutive year
3. The survey rates cities worldwide based on 30 qualitative and quantitative criteria, which fall into five general categories: Stability, Health care, Culture and environment, Education, Infrastructure
4. New Delhi dropped to rank 118th
5. Mumbai fell two places to rank 119th
6. Reasons for decline: Abuses against journalists, Rise in Crime rates, Climatic changes, Constrained liveability.

Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU):

It is the world leader in global business intelligence. It is a part of the Economist Group(UK). It provides forecasting and advisory services through research and analysis, such as monthly country reports, five-year country economic forecasts, country risk service reports, and industry reports.

Major reports are:

1. Democracy Index
2. Worldwide Cost of Living
3. Inclusive Internet Index
4. Global Liveability Index

INDIA-RUSSIA ANNUAL SUMMIT, VLADIVOSTOK

PM Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin held delegation-level talks in Vladivostok, Russia. The two leaders had discussion on expanding spectrum of bilateral ties, bolstering cooperation in trade and investment, oil and gas, mining, nuclear energy, defence and security sectors.

List of MoUs:

1. Reaching New Heights of Cooperation through Trust and Partnership
2. Joint Strategy for the Enhancement of India- Russia Trade and Investments
3. Cooperation in the production of spare parts for Russian/Soviet military equipment
4. Cooperation in Audiovisual Co-production
5. MoU on bilateral cooperation in the road transport and road industry
6. MoU on the Development of Maritime Communications between the Port of Chennai, & Vladivostok
7. Cooperation between the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (India) and the Federal Customs Service (Russia), for combating customs violations in 2019-2022
8. MoU on the use of Natural Gas for Transportation and expansion of cooperation in oil and gas sector
9. MoU to cooperate in coking coal mining projects implementation in the Russian Far East
10. Cooperation Agreement between Invest India and the Russian Direct Investment Fund for Investment Collaboration
11. MoU between the Joint Stock Company NOVATEK and PETRONET LNG Limited on joint development of downstream LNG Business and LNG supplies.

EASTERN ECONOMIC FORUM &

Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) was established by a decree of the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, in 2015. The aim is supporting the economic development of Russia's Far East, and to expand international cooperation in the Asia-Pacific Region.

PM Modi became first Indian prime minister to visit the Russian Far East Region. He visited the place to participate in the 20th India-Russia annual summit with President Putin and the fifth meeting of the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF).

'EAT RIGHT MOVEMENT' CAMPAIGN'

Government has launched a mass media campaign on the Eat Right India movement. Aligned with flagship public health programmes such as POSHAN Abhiyaan, Anemia Mukh Bharat, Ayushman Bharat Yojana and Swachh Bharat Mission.

1. Launched by FSSAI
2. Aims to cut down salt/sugar and oil consumption by 30% in three years
3. To engage and enable citizens to improve their health and wellbeing by making the right food choices.
4. Measures in place: has put in place regulatory measures under three major pillars: Eat Safe, Eat Health and Eat Sustainably for the programme.

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5. Prescribed a limit for Total Polar Compounds (TPC) at 25% in cooking oil to avoid the harmful effects of reused cooking oil.
6. Significance of the campaign: need of a movement on preventive health for all in the backdrop of the increasing burden of non-communicable diseases including diabetes, hypertension and heart diseases
7. Deficiencies of vitamins and minerals and rampant food-borne illnesses.

KAUSHALACHARYA AWARDS

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) announced Kaushalacharya Awards 2019 to felicitate trainers from different sectors for exceptional contribution towards creating a future-ready and skilled workforce. Total 53 trainers from experts of WorldSkills Competition winners, trainers from National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs), Industrial Training Centres (ITI), Jan Sikshan Sansthan (JSS) and trainers from reputed Corporate houses were honoured.

EX TSENTR 2019

Military contingents from India will take part in this year's Exercise TSENTR 2019.

1. Part of the Russian Armed Forces' annual training cycle
2. Conducted by Central Military Commission of Russia between 09 September to 23 September 19 at Donguz training ranges, Orenburg, Russia.
3. China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan took part
4. Aims at evolving drills of the participating armies in the fight against international terrorism.

INDUS VALLEY SETTLERS HAD A DISTINCT GENETIC LINEAGE

A study of DNA from skeletal remains excavated from the Harappan cemetery at Rakhigarhi argues that the hunter-gatherers of South Asia- people from Indus Valley Civilisation, who then became a settled people, have an independent origin.

1. Harappans do not contain genome from either the Steppe region or ancient Iranian farmers.
2. Developed into agricultural communities and formed the Harappan civilisation.
3. Traded with Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Persian Gulf and almost all across South Asia, there was bound to be movement of people resulting in a mixed genetic history.
4. India had a heterogeneous population right from the beginning of settled life.
5. Movement of people from east to west as the Harappan people's presence is evident at sites like Gonur in Turkmenistan and Sahr-i-Sokhta in Iran.
6. Researchers find no trace of the Anatolian-related ancestry that is a hallmark of the spread of farming to the west, but the Iranian-related ancestry they detected in South Asians comes from a lineage that separated from ancient Iranian farmers and huntergatherers before those groups split from each other.
7. Background and significance of the study: With these findings, the theory of the Harappans having Steppe pastoral or ancient Iranian farmer ancestry thus stands refuted.
8. Finding also negates the hypothesis about mass migration during Harappan times from outside South Asia.

INDIAN OCEAN CONFERENCE

Fourth Indian Ocean Conference 2019 held in Male, capital of Maldives.

1. Theme: 'Securing the Indian Ocean Region: Traditional and Non-Traditional Challenges'.
2. Initiated by India Foundation along with its partners from Singapore, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh.
3. Annual effort to bring together Heads of States/Governments, Ministers, Thought Leaders, scholars, diplomats, bureaucrats and practitioners from across the region
4. 40% of the world's offshore oil production takes place in the Indian Ocean basin.
5. Fishing in the Indian Ocean now accounts for almost 15% of the world's total.
6. Mineral resources are equally important, with nodules containing nickel, cobalt, and iron, and massive sulphide deposits of manganese, copper, iron, zinc, silver, and gold.
7. Indian Ocean coastal sediments are also important sources of titanium, zirconium, tin, zinc, and copper.
8. Rare earth elements are present, even if their extraction is not always commercially feasible.

ABOUT NCPCR

1. The National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) was set up in March 2007 under the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005.
2. Works under the administrative control of the MoWCD
3. Child means any person in the 0 to 18 years age group.
4. The Commission's Mandate is to ensure that all Laws, Policies, Programmes, and Administrative Mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

DRAFT NATIONAL RESOURCE EFFICIENCY POLICY

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change have issued draft national resource policy.

Key features of the policy:

1. Seeks to set up a National Resource Efficiency Authority (NREA) with a core working group housed in the MoEF & CC and a members group with representations from different ministries, state/union territory, and other stakeholders
2. It would be supported by an Inter-Ministerial National Resource Efficiency Board to guide on the aspects critical to its implementation
3. Plans to offer tax benefits on recycled materials, green loans to small and medium Enterprises (SMEs) and soft loans to construct waste disposal facilities, apart from setting up Material Recovery Facilities (MRF).
4. To drive the country towards circular economy through efficient use of available material resources, based on principle of 6R and 'green public procurement'.
5. The 6R stands for reduce, reuse, recycle, redesign, re-manufacture and refurbish
6. While the very premise of 'green public procurement' is to procure products with lower environmental footprints such as secondary raw materials and locally sourced materials.
7. Also pitches for moving towards 'zero landfill' approach
8. Hinting at possibility of imposing 'landfill taxes' and 'high tipping fees' for bulk generators of waste so that they can move towards optimal use of materials and better waste management
9. What is Resource Efficiency means very simply put is making more with fewer materialsthrough a life-cycle approach

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10. It leads to minimizing impact on environment & the associated societal burdens, transforming 'waste' into 'resources' fostering circular economy, and strengthening resource security.
11. Enhancing resource efficiency (RE) and promoting the use of secondary raw materials (SRM) is a pertinent strategy to address these challenges and reduce dependence on primary resource.
12. India's resource extraction of 1580 tonnes/acre is much higher than the world average of 450 tonnes/acre, while material productivity remains low.
13. Water is fast becoming scarce while deteriorating air quality has emerged as a major threat to human life.
14. Import dependency is nearly 100% for the majority of the 'most critical' materials -cobalt, copper and lithium that find extensive application in high-end technology industry
15. Over 80% of crude oil that is processed in the economy is imported, alongwith 85% of its coking coal demand
16. To add to the problems, the country's recycling rate is just about 20-25% compared with 70% in developing countries in Europe.
17. NITI Aayog in collaboration with the European Union delegation released the Strategy on Resource Efficiency. The strategy aims to promote resource efficiency in India.
18. Strategy is the first policy document to emphasize resource productivity in the country.

INDIA AMONG TOP 10 NATIONS IN GOLD RESERVES

1. According to the latest release by the World Gold Council, U.S. leads the country list with total gold reserves of 8,133.5 tonnes followed by Germany with 3,366.8 tonnes.
2. IMF is ranked third, it is followed by countries such as Italy, France, Russia, China
3. India has pipped the Netherlands to move into the list of top ten countries in terms of total gold reserves
4. India has gold reserves totalling 618.2 tonnes
5. Which is marginally higher than the Netherlands' reserves of 612.5 tonnes

INDIA IODINE SURVEY 2018- 19 REPORT

India Iodine Survey report has been released. Conducted by Nutrition International in collaboration with the AIIMS and the Indian Coalition for the Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (ICCIDD).

1. Iodised salt is salt with at least 15 parts per million of iodine.
2. Gujarat produces 71% of salt followed by Rajasthan at 17% and Tamil Nadu at 11%.3% of Indian households consumed adequately iodised salt.
3. Tamil Nadu (61.9%) has the lowest consumption being the third biggest producer of salt in the country.
4. It is followed by Andhra Pradesh (63.9%), Rajasthan (65.5%), Odisha (65.8%) and Jharkhand (68.8%).
5. Only 13 out of 36 States have achieved Universal Salt Iodisation or have 90% of households with access to adequately iodised salt.
6. Need for and significance of Iodised Salt: vital micro-nutrient for optimal mental and physical development of human beings.
7. Deficiency of iodine can result in a range of disabilities and disorders such as goitre, hypothyroidism, cretinism, abortion, still births, mental retardation and psychomotor defects.

HURRICANE DORIAN

1. India has announced an immediate humanitarian assistance of \$1 million to help people in The Bahamas affected by Hurricane Dorian.
2. Caused large scale destruction in the Bahamas.
3. Extremely powerful and destructive Category 5 hurricane.
4. It was the first major hurricane of 2019 Atlantic hurricane season.

'ANGAN'- INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ENERGY EFFICIENCY IN BUILDING SECTOR

The recently held international conference, ANGAN (Augmenting Nature by Green Affordable New-habitat), focussed on Energy Efficiency in Building Sector.

1. Organised by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE), Ministry of Power in collaboration with GIZ under the Indo German Technical Cooperation
2. Aim is to provide a platform to deliberate on interdependence between organizations, systemic sustainability and feedback loops for better resource efficiency.

NILGIRI TAHR

The population of Nilgiri tahr in the Mukurthi National Park have risen from 568 in 2018 to 612 this

1. Habitat and distribution: found at high elevations-open montane grassland habitats at altitudes of 1,200 – 2,600 meters of the South Western Ghats.
2. Present distribution limited to 5% of the Western Ghats in Kerala & Tamil Nadu.
3. It is the state animal of Tamil Nadu.
4. Eravikulam National Park is home to its largest population.
5. Population: Around 2,500 in Wild.
6. Conservation status: Schedule I of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and Endangered on IUCN Red List.
7. Mukurthi National Park is a protected area located in the northwest corner of Tamil Nadu.
8. Has montane grasslands and shrublands interspersed with sholas in a high-altitude area of high rainfall
9. Part of Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve, India's first International Biosphere Reserve
10. Also a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

ARBITRATION AND CONCILIATION (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2019

The Central Government has enforcement various Sections of the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Act, 2019 by notifying it in Gazette.

Salient features of amendment act:

1. Amends Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996
2. Provisions to deal with domestic and international arbitration
3. Defines the law for conducting conciliation proceedings.
4. Arbitration Council of India: establishes an independent body called the Arbitration Council of India (ACI)

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5. Composition of the ACI: a Chairperson who is either: (i) a Judge of the Supreme Court; or (ii) a Judge of a High Court; or (iii) Chief Justice of a High Court; or (iv) an eminent person having expertise in arbitration
6. Relaxation of time limits: Under the original Act, arbitral tribunals make their award within a period of 12 months
7. Amendment act remove this time restriction for international commercial arbitrations
8. Completion of written submissions: written claim & defence to the claim should be completed within six months
9. Confidentiality of proceedings: proceedings kept confidential except for the details of the arbitral award in certain circumstances
10. Applicability of Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 2015: clarifies that the 2015 Act shall only apply to arbitral proceedings which started on or after October 23, 2015.

INDO-BANGLADESH ENERGY TIES

The government of Bangladesh signed an agreement with Reliance Power of India to set up 750 MW gas-based power plant in Meghnahat near Dhaka.

1. To be Completed by 2022
2. Estimated cost-1 billion dollar
3. An MoU also signed between Reliance Power and Petro Bangla to set up 500 mmscf LNG terminal at Kutubdia Island near Chittagong in Bangladesh
4. Power and Energy Sector Cooperation (As on 31 December 2018):Bangladesh currently importing 1160 MW of power from India
5. 1320 MW coal-fired Maitree thermal power plant, a 50:50 JV between NTPC of India and Bangladesh constructed at Rampal
6. GOI also extending financial assistance for 30 Km India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline for supply of diesel from Siliguri to Parbatipur in Bangladesh.

INDIA SOUTH KOREA DEFENCE RELATIONS

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh paid an official visit to South Korea.

Key highlights of the visit:

1. Concluded a military logistics agreement to extend logistical
2. Support to each other's Navies
3. India will be able to get assured logistic support when it operates in the Indo-Pacific in the ports of South Korea
4. MoU was signed to further defence educational exchanges
5. Two also formulated a forwardlooking road map to take bilateral defence industry cooperation to the next level.
6. Includes proposed areas of cooperation in land, aero and naval systems, R&D cooperation and collaboration in testing, certification and quality assurance
7. Invited the South Korean industry to explore the feasibility of local production of items, used in main weapon systems imported by defence public sector undertakings (PSUs)
8. Stressed that South Korea's 'New Southern Policy' and India's 'Act East Policy' will provide a strong framework for future engagement and consolidation of Special Strategic Partnership

CABINET APPROVES INFUSION OF CAPITAL BY GOVERNMENT IN IDBI BANK

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the Infusion of Rs 4,557 crore by Government in IDBI Bank.

1. It will help in completing the process of IDBI Bank's turnaround and enable it to return to profitability and normal lending, and giving Government the option of recovering its investment at an opportune time.
2. IDBI Bank needs a one time infusion of capital to complete the exercise of dealing with its legacy book. It has already substantially cleaned up, reducing net NPA from peak of 18.8% in June 2018 to 8% in June 2019. The capital for this has to come from its shareholders.
3. LIC is at 51% and is not allowed to go higher by the insurance regulator. Of the Rs. 9,300 crore needed, LIC would meet 51% (Rs. 4,743 crore). Remaining 49%, amounting to Rs. 4,557 crore, is proposed from Government as its share on one time basis.
4. After this infusion, IDBI Bank expects to be able to subsequently raise further capital on its own and expects to come out of RBI's Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework sometime next year. This cash neutral infusion will be through recap bonds i.e. Government infusing capital into the bank and the bank buying the recap bond from the Government the same day, with no impact on liquidity or current year's Budget.

6TH INDIA-CHINA STRATEGIC ECONOMIC DIALOGUE

The 6th India-China Strategic Economic Dialogue (SED) was held in New Delhi from 7-9 September 2019. The Dialogue comprised of round table meetings of Joint Working Groups (JWG) on Infrastructure, Energy, High-Tech, Resource Conservation, Pharmaceuticals and Policy coordination followed by technical site visits and closed door G2G meetings.

Set up between erstwhile Planning Commission and the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), China during the visit of Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao to India in December 2010, the SED has since then served as an effective mechanism for enhancing bilateral practical cooperation.

NITI Aayog after its formation has taken the Dialogue forward giving it a greater momentum. Under the aegis of the SED, senior representatives from both sides come together to constructively deliberate on and share individual best practices and successfully identify sector-specific challenges and opportunities for enabling ease of doing business and facilitating bilateral trade and investment flows.

Six standing Joint Working Groups with Co-Chairs (of the rank of Joint Secretary and above) are appointed by both sides to address pertinent economic and commercial issues across infrastructure, energy, high-tech, resource conservation, pharmaceuticals and policy coordination in a structured and outcome-oriented manner by ensuring regular interaction and continued exchanges between respective counterparts.

INDIA'S SECOND MULTI MODAL TERMINAL ON GANGA AT SAHIBGANJ IN JHARKHAND

- Recently, PM has inaugurated India's second riverine Multi Modal terminal built at Sahibganj in Jharkhand.
- This is being constructed on National Waterway-1 (River Ganga) under Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) aided by World Bank.

- The First Multi-Modal Terminal has been constructed at Varanasi over River Ganga. Salient features of Sahibganj Multi Modal Terminal.

Importance:

1. Industries in Jharkhand and Bihar will be opened up to the global market
2. Easier transportation of domestic coal from the local mines in Rajmahal area to various thermal power plants located along National Waterway-1.
3. Stone chips, fertilisers, cement and sugar are also expected to be transported through the terminal.
4. The connectivity to Kolkata, Haldia and further to the Bay of Bengal through convergence of Road-Rail-River Transport at Sahibganj.
5. Connectivity to North-East States through Bangladesh by river-sea route.
6. Accessibility for Indo-Nepal cargo connectivity through waterways route.

SEPTEMBER MONTH TO BE CELEBRATED AS 'RASHTRIYA POSHAN MAAH'

Government has announced that the entire month of September 2019 will be celebrated as the Rashtriya Poshan Maah.

1. Poshan Maah (nutrition month) is an initiative of the Ministry of Women and Child Development and NITI Aayog to give a push to Poshan Abhiyan.
2. The initiative aims to ensure a healthier future for women and children.
3. The theme of this initiative is Complementary Feeding.
4. During Poshan Maah, activities like Prabhat Pheri, Poshan Melas, Nukkad Nataks, School Based Events will be held to take the message of the importance of nutrition to every household.
5. POSHAN (National Nutrition mission) stands for Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition.
6. It was launched in 2018 and is implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child development.
7. The mission aims to ensure holistic development and adequate nutrition for pregnant women, mothers and children.
8. The initiative has the target to reduce the level of stunting, undernutrition and low birth weight by 2% each and anaemia by 3%.
9. It also aims to reduce stunting from 38.4% (NFHS-4) to 25% by 2022.
10. A key idea of the initiative is to incentivise Anganwadi Workers (AWs) for using ICTbased tools, making it easier to implement and monitor the programme.

THE INTERPOL GENERAL ASSEMBLY, WHICH INDIA WANTS TO HOST IN 2022

India has proposed to the Interpol that the General Assembly of the organization be held in India in 2022 as part of the nation's 75th Independence Day celebrations.

1. Interpol is the shorter and better known name of the International Criminal Police Organization.
2. It is a network comprising 192 member nations including India. The agency was established in 1923. It is headquartered at Lyon, France.
3. Interpol aims to help police in all its member countries to work together to make the world a safer place.
4. It enables police forces from different countries to share and access data on crimes and criminals and offers a range of technical and operational support.
5. The General Assembly is Interpol's supreme governing body, and comprises representatives from all its member countries.

6. The General Assembly meets annually for a session to vote on activities and policy.
7. The General Assembly's decisions take the form of Resolutions.
8. Each member country has one vote.
9. Decisions are made either by a simple or a two-thirds majority depending on the subject matter.

INDIA, JAPAN TO HOLD 2+2 DIALOGUE ON INDO-PACIFIC COOPERATION

India's Defence Minister is on a visit to Japan for the annual Defence Ministerial Meeting between the two countries. The meeting highlighted the significance of the Special Strategic and Global Partnership between India and Japan, especially in addressing the security, stability and regional peace.

1. The two countries have also decided to hold the first Foreign and Defence Ministerial Dialogue (2+2) ahead of the Japan-India Annual Summit this year.
2. The two countries has also welcomed Malabar 2019 which is a trilateral maritime exercise between India, Japan and the US which will be held between late September and early October, 2019.
3. Further, they also had a discussion about the second trilateral mine countermeasures exercise (MINEX) between India, Japan and the US, which was held in July, 2019.
4. They also discussed other bilateral exercises namely Dharma Guardian which was held in 2018 between the Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF) and the Indian Army.

INDIA, MALDIVES SIGN TREATY ON LEGAL COOPERATION IN CRIMINAL MATTERS

India and Maldives has signed a Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) in criminal matters. The treaty aims to enhance the effectiveness of both the countries in investigation and prosecution of crime, through cooperation and mutual legal assistance in criminal matters.

1. A mutual legal assistance treaty (MLAT) is an agreement between two or more countries for the purpose of gathering and exchanging information in an effort to enforce public or criminal laws.
2. MLATs can be bilateral (country to country), multilateral, regional (any regional grouping example ASEAN) and country to regional (India with all the countries of European Union).
3. This assistance may take the form of (a)examining and identifying people (b)places and things (c)custodial transfers and (d)providing assistance with the immobilisation of the instruments of criminal activity.
4. India has already signed Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) with 39 countries.

CENTRE HIKES PROCUREMENT PRICES OF ETHANOL FOR BLENDING WITH PETROL

Central Government has increased the prices of different grades of ethanol under the Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme for the forthcoming 2019-20 sugar season.

1. Ethanol Blended Petrol programme was launched in 2003.
2. It aims at blending ethanol with petrol thereby bringing it under the category of biofuels and saving millions of dollars by cutting fuel imports.
3. This programme has been extended to the whole of India except Union Territories of Andaman Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands with effect from 01st April, 2019.
4. The government has been notifying the administered price of ethanol since 2014 and is being implemented by the Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs).

5. The blending of ethanol in petrol has many benefits including (a) reduction in import dependency (b) support to agricultural sector (c) more environmentally friendly fuel (d) lesser pollution and (e) additional income to farmers.
6. The National Policy on Biofuels, 2018 also aims to increase the percentage of ethanol in petrol and diesel.
7. Its objective is to achieve 20% ethanol blending and 5% biodiesel- blending by the year 2030.

WORLD BIOFUEL DAY

1. World Biofuel Day is observed every year on the 10th of August to create awareness about the importance of non-fossil fuels as an alternative to conventional fossil fuels.
2. This year the theme of the World Biofuel Day is “Production of Biodiesel from Used Cooking Oil (UCO).
3. A biofuel is a fuel that is produced through contemporary processes from biomass, rather than very slow geological processes. So fuel that is produced from an organic matter in a short period of time is considered a biofuel.
4. Types of Biofuels:
 - a) First-generation biofuels- Biofuels, which derive energy from the conventional source or food sources (Sugarcane, Vegetable oil, Corn etc.)
 - b) Second-generation biofuels- Biofuels, which derive energy from non-food crops or portions of food crops that are not edible and considered as wastes are called second generation biofuels.
 - c) Third-generation biofuels- Fuels derived from micro-organisms like algae are called third generation biofuels.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDS ONLINE LOAN SALE PLATFORM

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up a task force to submit a report on the development of a secondary market for corporate loans. It was headed by T.N. Manoharan.

The task force has recommended setting up of a self- regulatory body of participants who would work on creating a platform for secondary sale of corporate loans. The task force has also called for amending regulations of SEBI, IRDA and PFRDA to enable participation of non- banking entities such as mutual funds, insurance companies and pension funds.

Currently, banks and NBFCs are the only participants in the primary and secondary loan markets. The task force has suggested for setting up an online loan sales platform to conduct auctions/sale process of the secondary market loans. Further, it has also recommended to create a Loan Contract Registry to remove information asymmetries between buyers and sellers.

About secondary market: The secondary market is the market where investors buy and sell securities they already own. It is also referred to as the stock market. Secondary loan market in India is largely restricted to asset reconstruction companies and ad hoc sale to other lenders including banks and no formalised mechanism has been developed to deepen the market

GREAT INDIAN BUSTARD

Noting the high mortality rate of the Great Indian Bustard, the National Green Tribunal has directed the Centre to prepare a time-bound action plan within two months for protection of the birds.

1. Great Indian Bustard is listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
2. It is covered in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).
3. It is listed as Critically Endangered on the IUCN Red List.
4. It has also been identified as one of the species for the recovery programme under the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India and the National Wildlife Action Plan (2002-2016).
5. Today, its population is confined mostly to Rajasthan and Gujarat. A Small population occurs in Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.
6. The Great Indian Bustard, one of the heaviest flying birds, can weigh up to 15 kg and grow up to one metre in height.
7. Less than 200 birds are left now, of which about 100 are in Rajasthan and if it is not protected, it would become the first mega species to disappear from India after Cheetah in recent times.
8. The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) recently added four species- the Northern River Terrapin, Clouded Leopard, Arabian Sea Humpback Whale, Red Panda- to a Recovery Programme for Critically Endangered Species.
9. The programme is one of the three components of the centrally funded scheme, Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (IDWH).
10. Started in 2008-09, IDWH is meant for: providing support to protected areas (national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, conservation reserves and community reserves except tiger reserves), o protection of wildlife outside protected areas and o recovery programmes for saving critically endangered species and habitats.
11. So far, 17 species have been identified under the recovery programme.
12. These are the Snow Leopard, Bustard (including Floricans), Dolphin, Hangul, Nilgiri Tahr, Marine Turtles, Dugongs, Edible Nest Swiftlet, Asian Wild Buffalo, Nicobar Megapode, Manipur Brown-antlered Deer, Vultures, Malabar Civet, Indian Rhinoceros, Asiatic Lion, Swamp Deer and Jerdon's Courser

6TH SCHEDULE OF THE CONSTITUTION

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) Writes to Union Home Minister & Union Tribal Affairs Minister Conveying Its recommendation to Include Union Territory of Ladakh Under 6th Schedule of Constitution Of India.

1. The total tribal population in Ladakh region is more than 97%. The region is inhabited by following Scheduled Tribes, namely: Balti, Beda, Bot, Boto, Brokpa, Drokpa, Dard, Shin Changpa, Garra, Mon, Purigpa
2. **6th schedule:** deals with the administration of the tribal areas in the four northeastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.
3. The governor is empowered to organise and re-organise the autonomous districts. If there are different tribes in an autonomous district, the governor can divide the district into several autonomous regions.
4. Each autonomous district has a district council consisting of 30 members, of whom four are nominated by the governor and the remaining 26 are elected on the basis of adult franchise.

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5. Elected members hold office for a term of five years (unless the council is dissolved earlier) and nominated members hold office during the pleasure of the governor.
6. Each autonomous region also has a separate regional council.
7. They can make laws on certain specified matters like land, forests, canal, water, shifting cultivation, village administration, inheritance of property, marriage and divorce, social customs and so on.
8. But all such laws require the assent of the governor.
9. Village councils: district and regional councils within their territorial jurisdictions can constitute village councils or courts for trial of suits and cases between the tribes
10. They hear appeals from them.

125th amendment bill: seeks to increase the financial and executive powers of the 10 Autonomous Councils in the Sixth Schedule

1. Amendments provide for elected village and municipal councils, ensuring democracy at the grassroot level.
2. Village councils will be empowered to prepare plans for economic development and social justice
3. The Finance Commission will be mandated to recommend devolution of financial resources to them.
4. The Autonomous Councils now depend on grants from Central ministries and the State government for specific projects
5. At least one-third of the seats will be reserved for women in the village and municipal councils in the Sixth Schedule areas of Assam, Mizoram and Tripura after the amendment is approved.

24TH WORLD ENERGY CONGRESS IN ABU DHABI

Abu Dhabi is hosting the 24th World Energy Congress. With Theme: 'Energy for Prosperity'. Held every three years and positioned as the flagship event of the World Energy Council, the Congress is the longest-running and most influential energy event in the world.

About World Energy Council: Formed in 1923, the Council is the UN-accredited global energy body, representing the entire energy spectrum, Composed of more than 3,000 member organisations located in over 90 countries and drawn from governments, private and state corporations, academia, NGOs and energy-related stakeholders.

MPATGM MISSILE

1. Man Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile is an Indian third-generation fire-and forget anti-tank guided missile, developed by DRDO.
2. With state-of-the-art Infrared Imaging Seeker along with advanced avionics.
3. List of India's Anti Tank guided missile: Amogha missile. Nag missile. Man-Portable Anti-tank Guided Missile (MPATGM).

ASEAN-INDIA TRADE IN GOODS AGREEMENT (AITIGA)

India and the 10-member ASEAN have agreed to initiate a review of the bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) in goods to make it more user-friendly, simple and trade facilitative. Have also agreed to initiate the review of the ASEAN-India trade in goods agreement

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1. ASEAN–India Free Trade Area (AIFTA) is a free trade area among the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and India
2. Came into force from January 2010.
3. Two trading partners set timelines for eliminating duties on the maximum number of goods traded between the two regions. Based on preliminary ASEAN data, two-way goods trade with India grew by 9.8 per cent from \$73.6 billion in 2017 to \$80.8 billion in 2018.
4. Need for review: India is not happy about the fact that its trade deficit with ASEAN has widened significantly since the pact was implemented.
5. NITI Aayog study reveals that India's trade deficit with ASEAN doubled to \$10 billion in 2017 from \$5 billion in 2011.
6. One of the reasons for the growing deficit is the low utilisation of the FTA route by Indian exporters to ASEAN countries because of difficulties faced in negotiating the rules.

FALL ARMYWORM (FAW)

Maize crops falling victim to fall armyworm in Bihar.

1. First detected in the African continent in 2016
2. Since then, it has spread to other countries such as China, Thailand, Malaysia and Sri Lanka
3. In India: first-time in Karnataka but Within a span of only six months, almost 50 per cent of the country, including Mizoram, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and West Bengal, has reported FAW infestations.
4. Given its ability to feed on multiple crops — nearly 80 different crops ranging from maize to sugarcane — FAW can attack multiple crops.
5. It can spread across large tracts of land as it can fly over large distances.
6. Explains the quick spread of the pest across India.

SNOW LEOPARD

Conservation of snow leopards and preservation of people's cultural values can prevent land degradation of the Himalayan ecosystem, said experts at the ongoing 14th Conference of Parties of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

1. Snow leopard is the apex predator in the region
2. Saving it will mean that we will need to save the prey base of herbivores too and to save the prey base will mean preserving the grassland that they feed on.
3. This will automatically lead to the prevention of land degradation.
4. Key facts: Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List
5. Inhabit alpine and subalpine zones at elevations from 3,000 to 4,500 m
6. State animal of Uttarakhand and the National Heritage Animal of Pakistan.
7. China contains as much as 60% of all snow leopard habitat areas.

NATIONAL ANIMAL DISEASE CONTROL PROGRAMME (NADCP)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP) and the National Artificial Insemination Programme at Mathura.

1. If a cow/buffalo gets infected with FMD, the milk loss is upto 100% which could last for four to six months.

2. case of Brucellosis the milk output reduces by 30%, during the entire life cycle of animal
3. Brucellosis also causes infertilityinfection of brucellosis can also be transmitted to the farm workers and livestock owners.

SANJAY MITRA COMMITTEE

Centre has set up a 3-member panel to oversee the bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories.

1. Committee will look into distribution of assets and liabilities
2. Bifurcation will come into existence on 31st of October
3. Composition: headed by Former Defence Secretary Sanjay Mitra.
4. Retired IAS officer Arun Goyal & Retired Indian Civil Accounts Service officer Giriraj Prasad Gupta-members
5. Background: On 5th of last month,centre had announced the abrogation of the special status given to J&K under Article 370 and bifurcation of the state into the two UTs.

MOTIHARI-AMLEKHGANJ PIPELINE

1. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Nepalese counterpart K P Sharma Oli inaugurated the Motihari-Amalekhgunj petroleum pipeline through video conferencing.
2. Route:69-km pipeline will transport fuel from Barauni refinery in Bihar's Begusarai district to Amalekhgunj in southeastern Nepal, situated across the border from Raxaul in East Champaran district.
3. Will tackle oil storage problem in Nepal
4. Amalekhgunj fuel depot capacity to store up to 16,000 kilolitres
5. Reduce cost of transporting fuel to landlocked Nepal from India.

VOLFEE INDEX

1. American investment firm JPMorgan has created 'Volfefe' index to track the impact of Donald Trump's tweets on US interest rates and stock market.
2. Named after Trump's mysterious covfefe tweet from May 2017, suggests that the President's tweets have increasingly moved the US rates markets immediately after they were published.
3. Analysts at Bank of America Merrill Lynch published a note saying that on the days where President Trump tweets relatively frequently tend to see negative returns of 9 basis points on average.

CHC FARM MACHINERY

Union Minister of State for Agriculture launched a multilingual Mobile App "CHC Farm Machinery" during a conference on Crop Residue Management in New Delhi.

1. Allow farmers to avail custom hiring services of CHCs located in a radius of 50 km.
2. App connects the farmers with Custom Hiring Centers in their area.
3. Custom Hiring Centers (CHCs): In 2010 CHCs for farm implements established in 100 National Innovations on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) villages by government of India.
4. Committee of farmers' nominated by the gram sabha manages the custom hiring centre.
5. More than 25 different types of farm machinery stocked in 100 CHCs

6. Most popular are rotavator, zero till drill, drum seeder, multi-crop planter, power weeder and chaff cutter

YADADRI TEMPLE

The Telangana government has ordered immediate removal of images of Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao and party symbols carved on the pillars of Yadadri temple after they created a furore.

1. Location on a hillock in Yadagirigutta of Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district, Telangana.
2. Features: Narasimha, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu.
3. Sanctum sanctorum or Garbhagriha of the temple is located in a cave
4. Renovation: K. Chandrasekhar Rao initiated the renovation in 2016
5. Temple was renamed as Yadadri by Vaishnavite ascetic Chinna Jeeyar Swamy, who is overseeing its construction.
6. **Key features:** The temple is built entirely in stone (by sculpting a hill of granite into a temple), probably the first one after the monolithic Kailasa Temple in the Ellora caves that was built in 8th
7. Lime mortar used.
8. Architecture based on Agama Shashtra.

INDIA POST PAYMENTS BANK (IPPB)

India Post Payments Bank (IPPB) announced the rollout of Aadhaar enabled Payment Services (AePS) at the first anniversary of its business operations. With AePS any person with a bank account linked to Aadhaar can perform basic banking services irrespective of the bank they hold their account with boost to Centre's efforts in expanding access to financial services for millions of unbanked and underbanked customers.

With this IPPB has become the single largest platform in the country for providing interoperable banking services to customers of any bank by leveraging the last mile unprecedented reach of the Postal network.

India Post Payments Bank established under the Department of Posts, Ministry of Communication with 100% equity owned by Government of India.

BLACK SPOTS

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has issued new guidelines to State governments for identifying accident 'black spots' on national highways and rectifying them. A black spot is defined as a stretch not more than 500m in length where five accidents have taken place or where ten fatalities have happened in the last three years account for 90% of road accidents 14,000-crore plan to identify black spots.

INDIA'S OIL DEMAND TO RISE AT FASTEST PACE IN WORLD : OPEC

The report has said that India's oil demand will rise by the fastest pace globally in 2019 and 2020 even as its economic expansion has slowed down. However, the report also highlighted that India has experienced lower than expected growth rates for first half of 2019 amid ongoing structural challenges. The report has said that structural reforms covering labour laws, taxation and the legal system can ease the path for India's businesses in the coming year.

RBI PANEL TO FIRM UP MECHANISM FOR ASSESSING ADEQUACY OF FOREX RESERVES

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The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has formed an internal group to assess whether foreign exchange reserves are adequate.

1. The panel is expected to study how much reserves are adequate to cover various risks. According to Bimal Jalan Committee report, the RBI's foreign exchange reserves in 2008 were higher than the country's external debt. But this position has reversed in 2019.
2. At present, India's foreign exchange reserves (more than \$400 billion) are significantly lower than the country's total external liabilities (\$1 trillion) and even lower than total external debt (\$500 billion).
3. This position is opposite to that in 2008 when India's foreign exchange reserves exceeded the then total external debt.
4. The Foreign exchange reserves of India consists of four categories which are **(a) Foreign Currency Assets (b) Gold (c) Special Drawing Rights (SDRs) and (d) Reserve Tranche Position.**
5. A reserve tranche is a portion of the required quota of currency each member country must provide to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) that can be withdrawn at any time without any interest during critical situations of a country.
6. The Special drawing rights (SDR) are an international reserve asset created by the IMF in 1969 to supplement its member countries official reserves.
7. The SDR is neither a currency nor a claim on the IMF.
8. The SDR basket includes five currencies namely the U.S. dollar, the euro, the Chinese renminbi, the Japanese yen and the British pound sterling.

JEEVAN KAUSHAL PROGRAMME

Union Minister of State for Human Resource Development has launched the Curriculum for Life Skills (Jeevan Kaushal) programme.

1. The Curriculum for Life Skills (Jeevan Kaushal) programme has been designed by the University Grants Commission (UGC).
2. The programmes are aimed at inculcating emotional and intellectual competencies in higher education students and help them overcome stress and manage time effectively.
3. The life skills programme will comprise of four courses namely
 - Communication skills
 - Professional skills
 - Leadership skills and
 - Universal human values

The programme will also focus on teamwork, problem-solving and decision-making among others.

EURASIAN ECONOMIC FORUM

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has organized the Eurasian Economic Union meeting. India had skipped the meeting as the event was organized to discuss and deliberate upon China's Belt and Road Initiative.

About China's Belt and Road initiative:

1. Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is an ambitious programme to connect Asia with Africa and Europe via land and maritime networks along six corridors.

2. The initiative aims at improving
 - (a) regional integration
 - (b) increasing trade
 - (c) stimulating economic growth
3. India has repeatedly opposed the BRI. The main reason for India's opposition to the BRI is the (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) CPEC which is a flagship programme of the BRI.
4. The CPEC passes through Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (Gilgit-Baltistan). As both India and Pakistan claim all of Kashmir, the area is considered a disputed territory by India.
5. The Ancient Silk Road or Silk Route was an ancient network of trade routes that were central to cultural interaction through regions of the Asian continent connecting the West and East from China to the Mediterranean Sea.

About Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU):

1. The Eurasian Economic Union is an international organization for regional economic integration that came into existence on 1st January 2015.
2. The member states of the Eurasian Economic Union are (a) Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Russian Federation.
3. The EAEU provides for free movement of goods, services, capital, and labour within its borders.
4. It pursues, coordinates, & harmonizes the policies in the sectors determined by the treaty and international agreements within the Union.

NATGRID

The National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) project wants to link social media accounts to the huge database of records related to immigration entry and exit, banking and telephone details among others. It is an integrated intelligence grid connecting databases of core security agencies to collect comprehensive patterns of intelligence that can be readily accessed by intelligence agencies.

About NATGRID's functions:

1. Under NATGRID, 21 sets of databases will be networked to achieve quick, seamless and secure access to desired information for intelligence/enforcement agencies.
2. The database would be accessible to authorised persons from 11 agencies on a case to case basis and only for professional investigations into suspected cases of terrorism.
3. It will utilize technologies like Big Data and analytics to study and analyze the huge amounts of data from various intelligence and enforcement agencies to help track suspected terrorists and prevent terrorist attacks.
4. Despite prone to such terror attacks, India don't have a well-formulated database of these terror networks.
5. The idea is to collate and analyze vital data to get a complete view of a situation.
6. Hence, the details that take one to three months can be had within minutes.
7. NATGRID will tackle the problem of coordination mechanism regarding data transfer from one agency to another agency.
8. Due to federal nature of government, the coordination at the center and states level is also lacking and in the case of any emergency, the response mechanism is not effective.
9. Hence, NATGRID will be effective in solving this problem

HIMVIJAY EXERCISE

1. Indian Army is scheduled to conduct a major Exercise called 'HimVijay'.
2. The exercise HimVijay will be conducted by 17 Mountain Strike Corps.
3. The exercise will take place in October, 2019 in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam.
4. The Indian army will join with the integrated battle groups (IBGs) for this exercise.
5. The Indian Air force (IAF) will also be part of the exercise for strategic airlift of personnel and equipment.
6. The primary aim of carrying out such an exercise is to test if the Mountain Strike Corps which is under the Eastern command can carry out operations in different terrains.

About Integrated Battle groups:

1. IBGs are brigade-sized, agile, self-sufficient combat formations which can swiftly launch strikes against adversary in case of hostilities.
2. Each IBG would be tailor-made based on Threat, Terrain and Task and resources will be allotted based on the three Ts.
3. The IBGs will also be defensive and offensive.
4. While the offensive IBGs would quickly mobilise and make thrust into enemy territory for strikes,
5. On the other hand, the defensive IBGs would hold ground at vulnerable points or where enemy action is expected.
6. The composition of the IBGs would also depend on this.

DISTRICT MINERAL FOUNDATIONS

Amendments to District Mineral Foundation (DMF) Trust Rules, 2015, by Chhattisgarh government has made it more inclusive, people-centric and will also empower people affected by mining in the state.

1. Chhattisgarh became the first state in July 2019, to amend DMF rules.
2. New rule mandates the inclusion of 10 Gram Sabha members directly from mining-affected areas in the DMF Governing Council (GC).
3. In Scheduled Areas, at least 50 per cent of the Gram Sabha members must be from Scheduled Tribes (ST).
4. To ensure better public accountability, a two-step social audit process has been mandated.
5. Provisions have also been introduced for five-year plan, which can be subjected to a third party review if the secretary of the mines department considers it to be necessary
6. Rules have also specified 'sustainable livelihood'
7. As a high priority issue, including for forest rights holders.
8. DMF were instituted under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Amendment Act 2015.
9. Non-profit trusts that works, as may be prescribed by the State Government.
10. Comes under the jurisdiction of the relevant State Government.
11. Pradhan Mantri Khanij Khestra Kalyan Yojana (PMKKKY) guidelines stipulate some "high priority" issues for DMFs, including: Drinking water, Health, Women and child welfare, Education, Livelihood and skill development, Welfare of aged and disabled, Sanitation
12. PMKKKY aims to provide for the welfare of areas and people affected by mining related operations, using the funds generated by District Mineral Foundations (DMFs).

13. Objectives of the scheme:

- To implement various developmental and welfare projects/programs in mining affected areas that complement the existing ongoing schemes/projects of State and Central Government.
- To minimize/mitigate the adverse impacts, during and after mining, on the environment, health and socio-economics of people
- To ensure long-term sustainable livelihoods for the affected people in mining areas

GLOBAL ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT HUB

India joins the Global Antimicrobial Resistance Research and Development Hub as a new member.

1. Launched in May 2018 in the margins of the 71st session of the World Health Assembly, following a call from G20 Leaders in 2017.
2. Members are 16 countries, the European Commission, two philanthropic foundations and four international organisations (as observers).
3. Functions are global priority setting and evidence-based decision-making on allocation of resources for AMR R&D through the identification of gaps, overlaps and potential
4. Benefits of this partnership for India: Opportunity to work with all partners to leverage their existing capabilities, resources and collectively focus on new R&D intervention to address drug resistant infections.
5. Antimicrobial resistance means ability of a microbe to resist the effects of medication that once could successfully treat continues unabated around the world.
6. Superbugs are becoming more powerful and widespread than ever.
7. Medical experts are afraid that we're one step away from deadly, untreatable infections, since the mcr-1 E.coli is resistant to that last-resort antibiotic **Colistin resistance** is passed relatively easily from one bacteria to the next, since it is transmitted by way of loose genetic material that most bacteria have in common
8. WHO is afraid of a post-antibiotic world, where loads of bacteria are superbug infections like tuberculosis, gonorrhoea, and pneumonia are becoming harder to treat with typical antibiotics.

BIOTERRORISM

India's Defence Minister iterated that bio-terrorism among new threats facing Armed Forces Medical Services of SCO countries. He called on them to find effective ways to deal with new threats posed by advancing battle field technologies.

1. Bioterrorism is intentional release of biological agents (bacteria, viruses, or other germs).
2. Also referred to as germ warfare.
3. Living organisms can be unpredictable and incredibly resilient, biological weapons are difficult to control.
4. Potentially devastating on a global scale, and prohibited
5. Globally under numerous treaties.
6. Threat of bioterrorism is increasing as a result of the rise of technical capabilities, the rapid expansion of the global biotechnology industry, and the growth of loosely sophisticated networks of transnational terrorist groups that have expressed interest in bioterrorism.

PANGONG TSO LAKE

The Indian and Chinese armies clashed recently along the Pangong lake in Ladakh.

1. Pangon lake or Pangong Tso, a 135-km long lake, located in the Himalayas at the height of approximately 4,350 m, stretches out from India to China.
2. One-third of water body, its 45 km stretch, is in Indian control while the rest of the 90 km is under Chinese control.
3. It was formed from Tethys geosyncline.
4. It is a salt water lake.
5. Strategic significance: By itself does not have major tactical significance
6. But it lies in the path of the Chushul approach, one of the main approaches that China can use for an offensive into Indian-held territory.

DROUGHT TOOLBOX

Drought Toolbox was officially launched during the 14th Conference of Parties (COP14) to United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) held at Greater Noida, India.

1. Drought Toolbox used to assess drought risks in their regions much in advance
2. It can accurately evaluate the vulnerability of different geographic regions to drought.+suggest means to mitigate the adverse impact of acute water scarcity.
3. Uses 30 parameters, including soil moisture, rainfall data and temperature data of the present and past.
4. Toolkit includes three key aspects:
 - a) 'Monitoring and Early Warning' system,
 - b) 'Vulnerability and Risk Assessment' and
 - c) 'Risk Mitigation Measures'.
5. Ministry of Agriculture is the nodal ministry in monitoring and managing drought conditions and droughts are classified into meteorological droughts, hydrological droughts and agricultural droughts.
6. Droughts four times costlier than floods.
7. Economic impact of drought is more than \$80 billion a year.
8. Cause loss of food grains.

INDIAN INSTITUTE OF SKILLS, MUMBAI

Union Minister for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) laid the foundation stone of Indian Institute of Skills (IIS) at Mumbai.

1. Cabinet given nod to set up Indian Institute of Skills (IISs) in three cities — Mumbai, Ahmedabad and Kanpur
2. Constructed and operated on a PPP (Public-Private Partnership) model and on a not-for-profit basis.
3. Indian Institute Of Skills, Mumbai: a tertiary care institute on the lines of the Institutes of Eminence including IITs and IIMs.
4. Objective-provide skill training in highly-specialised areas such as deep technology, aerospace, to students who want to pursue technical education after completing Class X and XII.

5. Tata Education Development Trust (TEDT) was selected as the private partner for setting up IIS at NSTI campus in Mumbai through a competitive bidding process
6. Aim-to ensure that 5000 trainees will be passing out every year with 70% placement.

COLLEGIUM OF SUPREME COURT JUDGES

The recent controversy over the transfer of the Chief Justice of the Madras High Court, Justice Vijaya Kamlesh Tahilramani, to the Meghalaya High Court has once again brought to the fore a long-standing debate on the functioning of the 'Collegium' of judges.

1. Collegium of judges does not figure in the Constitution
2. Supreme Court's invention. Constitution says judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts are appointed by the President and speaks of a process of consultation.
3. Collegium is a system under which judges are appointed by an institution comprising judges. It also recommends the transfer of Chief Justices and other judges of High Courts.
4. First Judges Case (1981) ruled that the "consultation" with the CJI in the matter of appointments must be full and effective. However, the CJI's opinion should have primacy
5. Second Judges Case (1993) introduced the Collegium system, holding that "consultation" really meant "concurrence". It was added that it was not the CJI's individual opinion, but an institutional opinion formed in consultation with the two senior-most judges in the Supreme Court.
6. Third Judges Case (1998) SC on President's reference expanded the Collegium to a five-member body, comprising the CJI and four of his senior-most colleagues.
7. Procedure followed by the Collegium: President appoints the CJI and the other SC judges.
8. For other judges of the top court, the proposal is initiated by the CJI.
9. CJI consults the rest of the Collegium members, as well as the senior-most judge of the court hailing from the High Court to which the recommended person belongs.
10. Consultees must record their opinions in writing and it should form part of the file
11. Collegium sends the recommendation to the Law Minister, who forwards it to the Prime Minister to advise the President.
12. Attempt made to replace it by a 'National Judicial Appointments Commission' or 99th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2014 was struck down by the court in 2015 on the ground that it posed a threat to the independence of the judiciary.

PULIKALI

It is a Tiger Dance and a folk art of Kerala in which Artists wear a tiger mask, paint their bodies like tigers and dance to the rhythm of traditional percussion

SMALL FINANCE BANK (SFB)

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released 'Draft Guidelines for 'on tap' Licensing of Small Finance Banks in the Private Sector' for comments.

1. SFB registered as a public limited company under the Companies Act, 2013.
2. Governed by Banking Regulation Act, 1949 and RBI Act, 1934.
3. Small finance banks will be given scheduled bank status once they commence their operations.
4. NBFCs, micro finance institutions and local area banks in private sector can opt for conversion into small finance banks.

5. Public sector entities, large industrial business groups, autonomous boards not entertained
6. Capital requirement: minimum paid-up voting equity capital-Rs.200crore, except those which converted from UCBs.
7. SFB maintain minimum capital adequacy ratio of 15 per cent of its risk weighted assets (RWA) on a continuous basis.
8. Promoters' contribution: promoters hold a minimum of 40 per cent of the paid-up voting equity capital that would remain locked in for five years
9. Listing of shares: After the SFB reaches the net worth of Rs 500crore, listing will be mandatory within three years
10. SFBs having net worth of below Rs 500 crore could also get their shares listed voluntarily
11. Foreign shareholding: as per the extant FDI policy
12. Terminologies: A SFB undertake basic banking activities of acceptance of deposits and lending to unserved and underserved sections
13. RBI issued guidelines for licensing of SFBs in the private sector in 2014
14. An 'on-tap' facility would mean the RBI will accept applications and grant license for banks throughout the year subject to the fulfilment of the set conditions.

DELHI DECLARATION / UNCCD COP14 CONCLUDES

The 14th Conference of Parties (COP14) to United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) concluded in Greater Noida with member countries adopting the Delhi Declaration. COP 14 to UNCCD ended with a commitment to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) by 2030. Neutrality defined as enough land is available across the world to ensure a sustainable future

Delhi Declaration COP 14: Key Points:

1. Promote projects to prevent land degradation, drought and erosion at local, national and regional levels.
2. Create green jobs
3. Implement the UN Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030) program on behalf of all countries.
4. Launch of the Peace Forest Initiative and its potential contribution to increasing cooperation on land degradation neutrality.
5. Encourage local governments to adopt integrated land use management and enhanced land governance to rehabilitate the natural resource base
6. COP-14 member countries appreciate India's efforts of land restoration and increase south-south cooperation.

BASEL BAN AMENDMENT

The 1995 Basel Ban Amendment, a global waste dumping prohibition, has become an international law after Croatia (97th country to ratify) ratified it on September 6, 2019.

1. It will become a new Article in the Convention and will enter into force in the 97 countries after 90 days — on December 5.
2. About the 1995 Basel Ban Amendment: Adopted by the parties to the Basel Convention in 1995.
3. To protect human health and the environment against the adverse effects of hazardous wastes.
4. The amendment prohibits all export of hazardous wastes, including electronic wastes and obsolete ships from 29 wealthiest countries of OECD to non-OECD countries

5. Basel Convention — Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal: Opened for signature on 22 March 1989
6. Entered into force on 5 May 1992 Parties — 187.
7. International treaty that was designed to reduce the movements of hazardous waste between nations, and specifically to prevent transfer of hazardous waste from
8. Developed to less developed countries (LDCs).
9. Does not address the movement of radioactive waste.

WHO'S REPORT ON SUICIDE

A fact sheet released by the World Health Organization (WHO) shows that suicides account for one death every 40 seconds.

1. 8 lakh people die due to suicide every year
2. Global age-standardized suicide rate for 2016 -10.5 per 100 000.
3. 79% occurred in low- and middle-income countries
4. High-income countries had the highest rate, at 11.5 per 100 000.
5. Europe (12.85) tends to register the maximum, Eastern Mediterranean (4.3) reports the lowest average.
6. Nearly three times as many men as women die by suicide in high-income countries than low- and middle-income countries, where the rate is more equal.
7. Suicide was the second leading cause of death among young people aged 15-29 years, after road injury.
8. The most common methods of suicide are hanging, pesticide self-poisoning, and firearms.
9. Key interventions that have shown success in reducing suicides are restricting access to means; educating the media on responsible reporting of suicide; implementing programmes among young people to build life skills that enable them to cope with life stresses; and early identification, management and follow-up of people at risk of suicide.
10. On 10 September, WHO launched the 40 seconds of action campaign
11. Culmination of the campaign will be on World Mental Health Day, 10 October.

BOMBAY BLOOD GROUP

The demand for the “Bombay blood group” has suddenly spiked at Mumbai’s hospitals, but supply has been scarce. Names: H/H blood group is also known as Oh or the Bombay blood group.

1. Bombay blood group was first discovered in Mumbai (then Bombay) in 1952 by Dr Y M Bhende.
2. Bombay blood group, also called hh, is deficient in expressing antigen H, meaning the RBC has no antigen H. For instance, in the AB blood group, both antigens A and B are found. A will have A antigens; B will have B antigens. In hh, there are no A or B antigens.
3. O group has Antigen H, while the hh group does not.
4. hh blood type-one in four million
5. Higher incidence in South Asia; in India, one in 7,600 to 10,000 are born with this type
6. More common in South Asia than anywhere else because of inbreeding and close community marriages.

REGULATION OF NON-PERSONAL DATA : MeitY SETS UP NEW COMMITTEE

Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (Meity) has formed a new Committee of Experts to focus on non-personal data.

1. The committee is headed by the Infosys co-founder Kris Gopalakrishna.
2. The committee is mandated to study various issues relating to non-personal data and to make specific suggestions for consideration of the central government on regulation of non-personal data.
3. The draft Personal Data Protection Bill by Srikrishna Committee only dealt with personal data.
4. It had recommended that the government should come up with a law to protect non personal data.
5. Non-personal data is usually held by large commercial entities like cab-aggregators, e-commerce companies that use the community data generated on their platforms to improve their services.
6. This is in addition to anonymised datasets also being provided to government bodies and departments by large internet companies to assist in policy making.

SALIENT FEATURES OF DRAFT OF PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION BILL, 2018

It is based on the recommendations of the government-constituted panel headed by Justice BN Srikrishna.

1. The Bill regulates the processing of personal data of individuals (data principals) by government and private entities (data fiduciaries) incorporated in India and abroad.
2. The bill provides individuals several rights with respect to their data such as seeking correction or seeking access to their data which is stored with the fiduciary.
3. The bill says that government and private entities has certain obligations towards the individual while processing their data such as notifying them of the nature and purposes of data processing.
4. The Bill allows exemptions for certain kinds of data processing such as processing in the interest of national security for legal proceedings or for journalistic purposes.
5. The Bill requires that a serving copy of personal data be stored within the territory of India.
6. Certain critical personal data must be stored solely within the country.
7. A national-level Data Protection Authority (DPA) is to be set up to supervise and regulate data fiduciaries.

INDIAN OCEAN NAVAL SYMPOSIUM (IONS)

The IONS is a regional forum of Indian Ocean littoral states launched by India in February 2008.

1. It is a voluntary initiative that seeks to increase maritime co-operation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) by providing an open and inclusive forum for discussion of regionally relevant maritime issues.
2. It endeavours to generate a flow of information between naval professionals that would lead to common understanding and possibly cooperative solutions on the way ahead.
3. These States are represented by the heads of their navies.
4. Under the IONS charter of business adopted in 2014, the forum has working groups on o Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR), Information Security and Interoperability (IS&I) and o Maritime Security (anti-piracy).

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5. IONS which was started by Indian Navy in 2008, has grown into a formidable organisation with 23 'Member' nations and 'Eight' observers, which have been geographically grouped into the following four subregions:
 6. South Asian Littorals: India, Bangladesh, Maldives, Pakistan, Seychelles and Sri Lanka.
 7. West Asian Littorals: Iran, Oman, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates
 8. East African Littorals: France (Reunion), Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, South Africa, Eritrea and Tanzania.
 9. South East Asian and Australian Littorals: Australia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Timor-Leste. Observers
10. There are eight states with observer status: China, Germany, Italy, Japan, Madagascar, Netherlands, Russia and Spain. IONS Chairmanship
11. Continuing with the active engagement within IONS, Bangladesh, the current 'Chair' of IONS conducted the first ever operational exercise called International Multilateral Maritime Search and Rescue Exercise (IMMSAREX) under the IONS Charter.

INDIA, AUSTRALIA TO ELEVATE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

India and Australia are likely to conclude the mutual logistics support agreement and a broader maritime cooperation agreement to elevate the strategic partnership. Currently, defence cooperation between the two countries is based on (a)Memorandum on Defence Cooperation 2006 (b)Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation 2009 and (c) bilateral Framework for Security Cooperation 2014.

AUSINDEX: It is a biennial bilateral maritime exercise between Indian Navy and Royal Australian Navy (RAN). The first edition of the exercise, AUSINDEX-15 took place in 2015 off the East Coast of India.

MAHATMA GANDHI NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE ACT (MGNREGA)

Staring at a slump in rural demand and a slowdown in the rural economy, the Centre plans to inject more money into the UPA's flagship Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme by linking wages under the Act to an updated inflation index, which will be revised annually.

1. At present, the Consumer Price Index for agricultural labourers (CPI-AL) determines MGNREGA wage revisions.
2. Food items make up more than two-thirds of the CPIAL consumption basket, but rural workers today spend a much smaller percentage of their money on subsidised food, and an increasingly larger amount on health, education and transport costs.
3. The employment to be provided within a radius of 5 km: if it is above 5 km extra wage will be paid.
4. Individual beneficiary-oriented works can be taken up on the cards of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, small or marginal farmers or beneficiaries of land reforms or beneficiaries under the Indira Awaas Yojana of the Government of India.
5. Within 15 days of submitting the application or from the day work is demanded, wage employment will be provided to the applicant.
6. Right to get unemployment allowance in case employment is not provided within fifteen days of submitting the application or from the date when work is sought.
7. Receipt of wages within fifteen days of work done.
8. It is a demand driven programme.

9. The demand for work is influenced by various factors such as rain-fall, availability of alternative and remunerative employment opportunities outside MGNREGS.
10. Social Audit of MGNREGA works is mandatory.
11. MGNREGA works address the climate change vulnerability and protect the farmers from such risks and conserve natural resources.
12. It is the Gram Sabha and the Gram Panchayat which approves the shelf of works under MGNREGA and fix their priority.
13. In 2014, the amendment to MGNREGA was done which mandates that at least 60% expenditure will be on agriculture and allied activities.
14. The ratio of expenditure on unskilled wage labour to overall expenditure is 60:40. Earlier it was mandated at Gram Panchayat level but now it is mandated at the District level.
15. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been signed between the Ministry of Rural Development and National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), Hyderabad, Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Department of Space for geo-tagging of the assets created under MGNREGS in each Gram Panchayat. Under MGNREGS, every asset is mandatorily geotagged.
16. The Ministry has taken up skill development of the MGNREGA workers through initiatives like Bare Foot Technicians and Project LIFE (Livelihood In Full Employment) in order to move them up the skilling ladder.

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA)

MGNREGA provides a legal guarantee for one hundred days of employment in every financial year to adult members of any rural household willing to do public work-related unskilled manual work at the statutory minimum wage.

An additional 50 days of wage employment are provided over and above 100 days in the notified drought affected areas or natural calamity areas in the country on recommendation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers Welfare.

The Ministry also mandates the provision of additional 50 days of wage employment to every Scheduled Tribe Household in a forest area, provided that these households have no other private property except for the land rights provided under the FRA Act, 2006.

SHOLA FORESTS

Shola forests are tropical Montane forests found in the valleys separated by rolling grasslands only in the higher elevations. The shola forests are patches of forests that occur only in the valleys where there is least reach of the fog and mist. Other parts of the mountains are covered in grasslands. The trees never grow on the mountain tops.

1. The Shola forests are generally said to be found in altitudes above 2000 metres of sea-level. Although they are found from altitudes higher than 1600 metres.
2. Shola forests are a native only to the Southern Western Ghats. They are found only in the high altitude mountains of the states Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Nowhere else in the world exist such a kind of forests.
3. Due to high isolation and unique climatic conditions, the Shola forests are characterised by high endemism.

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4. The species of plants and animals found here are native to this region (this climatic region to be more specific) and such species cannot be found anywhere else in the world.
5. Large animals like Tiger, Elephants, Leopard and Gaurs are also found to inhabit the grassland-shoal complex.

The Shola tree species have one of the lowest regeneration rates and are very sensitive to climatic conditions which make them very vulnerable. Moreover, most Shola trees produce drupaceous fruits which are difficult to produce more number of seeds and there is less way to disperse them successfully. These forests and grasslands are being cleared for agriculture. These forests are relatively easy to clear as they constitute mainly of grasslands and trees are generally stunted with no timber value. Construction of hill stations is another major threat to these forests. These forests usually exist in higher elevations, these places are unfortunately have suitable climate to be made as Hill stations and tourist spots. Mining activities also lead to habitat destruction of the flora and fauna of the Western Ghats. Hydroelectric projects and dams are a great threat as it submerges thousands of acres of forests.

Sky Islands – The shola forests form unique regions called “Sky Islands” which occur only at higher elevations, are usually isolated and separated from each other and the lowland terrain. Each sky island may have a climatic condition that is unique to itself. This leads to a great endemism in plants and animals.

BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOT

The British biologist Norman Myers coined the term "biodiversity hotspot" in 1988 as a biogeographic region characterized both by exceptional levels of plant endemism and by serious levels of habitat loss.

1. To qualify as a biodiversity hotspot, a region must meet two strict criteria: It must have at least 1,500 vascular plants (> 0.5% of the world's total) as endemics. And, It must have 30% or less of its original natural vegetation. In other words, it must be threatened.
2. Around the world, 36 areas around the world qualify as hotspots.
3. They represent just 2.4% of Earth's land surface, but they support more than half of the world's plant species as endemics — i.e., species found no place else — and nearly 43% of bird, mammal, reptile and amphibian species as endemic
4. There are 36 identified Biodiversity Hotspots in the world.

BIODIVERSITY HOTSPOTS IN INDIA

1. Himalaya: Includes the entire Indian Himalayan region (and that falling in Pakistan, Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, China and Myanmar).
2. Indo-Burma: Includes entire North-eastern India, except Assam and Andaman group of Islands (and Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia and southern China).
3. Sundalands: Includes Nicobar group of Islands (and Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei, Philippines).
4. Western Ghats and Sri Lanka: Includes entire Western Ghats (and Sri Lanka).

HEAD ON GENERATION TECHNOLOGY

1. Indian Railways to move to HOG technology to power the trains.

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2. In the new technology called - Head on Generation technology, the power will be drawn from the Overhead Electric supply.
3. The power generator cars which used to make huge noise and emit fumes will no more be there.
4. Currently, the cost of power is over Rs. 36 per unit and with HOG it will available at Rs. 6 Per unit.
5. All new coaches from Production Units are to be HOG compliant.

ACCESS TO INTERNET IS A BASIC RIGHT

Kerala HC The Kerala High Court has held that the right to have access to the Internet is part of the fundamental right to education as well as the right to privacy under Article 21 of the Constitution.

College student from Kozhikode was recently expelled from the college hostel for using her mobile phone beyond the restricted hours. This was challenged in the court. Petitioner contended that the internet, accessible through mobile phones or laptops, provided an avenue for the students to gather knowledge.

ADITYA- L1 MISSION

The Indian Space Research Organization is planning to launch Aditya- L1 mission to study the sun early in 2020.

1. India's first solar mission.
2. It will study the sun's outer most layers, the corona and the chromospheres and collect data about coronal mass ejection, which will also yield information for space weather prediction.
3. Significance of the mission: will be immensely helpful in discriminating between different models for the origin of solar storms and also for constraining how the storms evolve and what path they take through the interplanetary space from the Sun to the Earth.
4. In order to get the best science from the sun, continuous viewing of the sun is preferred without any occultation/ eclipses and hence, Aditya- L1 satellite will be placed in the halo orbit around L1 of the sun-earth system
5. Lagrangian points are locations in space where the combined gravitational pull of two large masses roughly balance each other five such points in Sun-Earth system and they are denoted as L1, L2, L3, L4 and L5
6. Halo orbit is a periodic three-dimensional orbit near the L1, L2 or L3.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE SUPPORT SYSTEM

ERSS is one of the key projects of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs under Nirbhaya Fund. Designed to play a pivotal role in mitigation or preventing escalation of crime, especially against women and children.

Provides a single emergency number (112), computer aided dispatch of field resources to the location of distress. Citizens can send their emergency information through call, sms, email and through the 112 India mobile app.

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE 2019

United Nations (UN) General Assembly declared 21 September as International Day of Peace. Established in 1981 by unanimous United Nations resolution, Peace Day provides a globally shared date for all

humanity to commit to Peace above all differences and to contribute to building a Culture of Peace. Theme-“Climate Action for Peace”.

WORLD'S SECOND LARGEST COAL BLOCK

Deaucha Panchami coal block of Birbhum Coalfield Area is World's Second Largest Coal Block, situated in West Bengal. Also, largest coal mine or coal block in Asia, due to the number of coal reserves.

SANGAM CIVILIZATION

Older than thought Carbon samples collected from Keezhadi, the Sangam-era site, have been found to belong to 580 BC, according to accelerator mass spectrometry dating results. This suggests that the urbanisation of Vaigai plains happened earlier than thought – around the 6th century BC.

1. Tamil Brahmi script originated in the 6th century BC
2. People were either literate or at least knew the art of writing
3. Literate society: letters found were inscribed when the pot was wet or after the pot became dry
4. Skeletal fragments of cow/ox, buffalo, sheep, goat, nilgai, blackbuck, wild boar and peacock were found.
5. Good quality materials used for building: brick and roof tiles contained more than 80% silica mixed with 7% lime while lime plaster possessed 97% of lime
6. High standard of living: Long walls, Well-laid floors along with roof tiles in a collapsed state, iron nails fastened to the poles and rafters prove a high standard of living during the Sangam age.

PRADHAN MANTRI MATRU VANDANA YOJANA

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), a flagship scheme of the Government for pregnant women and lactating mothers has achieved a significant milestone by crossing one crore beneficiaries.

1. The total amount disbursed to the beneficiaries under the scheme has crossed Rs. 4,000 crores.
2. Top five states in implementation: Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Rajasthan.
3. PMMVY: PMMVY rechristened from erstwhile Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY).
4. Launched in 2010, a conditional cash transfer scheme for pregnant and lactating women.
5. A partial wage compensation and cash benefit of Rs. 5,000 in three installments on fulfilling the respective conditionality, viz. early registration of pregnancy, ante-natal check-up and registration of the birth of the child and completion of first cycle of vaccination for the first living child
6. The eligible beneficiaries also receive cash incentive under Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY).
7. On an average, a woman gets Rs. 6,000.
8. Funding: a Centrally Sponsored Scheme; cost sharing ratio+60:40 between the Centre and the states. While for North-Eastern States & three Himalayan States; it is 90:10
9. 100% Central assistance for Union Territories without Legislature
10. Need for special attention: Under-nutrition affect majority of women, Every third woman is undernourished, every second woman is anaemic
11. An undernourished mother almost inevitably gives birth to a low birth weight baby.
12. When poor nutrition starts in-utero, it extends throughout the life cycle are largely irreversible
13. Owing to economic and social distress women continue to work to earn a living up to the last days of their pregnancy

14. Resume working soon after childbirth, even though their bodies might not permit
15. Impeding their ability to exclusively breastfeed in the first six months

DRAFT SOCIAL SECURITY CODE

1. Objectives of the draft is to amalgamate a clutch of existing laws and proposes several new initiatives including universal social security for unorganized sector workers and, insurance and healthbenefits for *gig workers*.
2. Key highlights of the draft: Insurance, PF, life cover for unorganized sector employees.
3. Centre shall formulate and notify, from time to time, suitable welfare schemes for unorganised workers on matter relating to life and disability cover; health and maternity benefits; old age protection; and any other benefit
4. Maternity Benefit: Subject to the other provisions of this Code, every woman shall be entitled to, and her employer shall be liable for, the payment of maternity benefit at the rate of the average daily wage for the period of her actual absence, period immediately preceding the day of her delivery, and any period immediately following that day.
5. The Code on Social Security, 2019 once in place will merge eight exiting labour laws including Employees' Compensation Act, 1923; Employees' State Insurance Act, 1948, Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952; Maternity Benefit Act, 1961; Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972; Cine Workers Welfare Fund Act, 1981; Building and Other Construction Workers act, Cess Act, 1996 and Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act, 2008.

TEASER LOAN

Teaser loan is an unofficial term used for loans that offer low, fixed interest rates in the initial few years, but switch to floating rates thereafter. RBI is not likely to allow the return of teaser home loans, following the introduction of the external benchmark-linked loan pricing.

KHANDERI

Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) delivered the second Scorpene submarine 'KHANDERI' to the Indian Navy at an event held in Mumbai. It will be commissioned into the Indian Navy on September 28 at the Naval Dockyard by Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

1. KHANDERI' named after the wide snouted Saw fish, a deadly sea predator of Indian Ocean
2. Scorpene class submarines: Six submarines built under Project 75
3. Capable to undertake various missions i.e. Anti-Surface warfare, Anti-Submarine warfare, intelligence gathering, mine laying, area surveillance etc.
4. Designed by French naval defence and energy group DCNS and manufactured by the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDSL), Mumbai
5. First submarine named INS KALVARI commissioned last September.
6. Constructions of third Scorpene KARANJ started in 2018
7. Fourth Scorpene - VELA launched in May 2019

8. Remaining two VAGIR and VAGSHEER in various stages of outfitting
9. Last to be delivered by 2022.

WAVE SUMMIT 2019

Union HRD Minister launched Waste Management Accelerator for Aspiring Women Entrepreneurs (WAVE Summit 2019).

1. Held in November-December 2019
2. Bodies Involved are organized by All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and Institute of Waste Management (IIWM) at Jaipur
3. Largest gathering of young women students
4. Providing alternatives to single use plastic carry bags.
5. Theme: Make your own bag – empowering women to take up income generation activity and entrepreneurship in waste management through making a business out of this record creating concept

ATLANTIC MERIDIONAL OVERTURNING CIRCULATION (AMOC)

Since the past 15 years, *Atlantic meridional overturning circulation (AMOC)* has been weakening-a development that could have dramatic consequences for Europe and other parts of the Atlantic rim.

1. Warming up of Indian Ocean is said to be a key driver behind this.
2. Warming in the Indian Ocean generates additional precipitation, which, in turn, draws more air from other parts of the world, including the Atlantic.
3. Higher level of precipitation in the Indian Ocean will reduce precipitation in the Atlantic and increase salinity in the waters.
4. AMOC is a large system of ocean currents that carry warm water from the tropics northwards into the North Atlantic.
5. Aids in distributing heat and energy around the earth, as the warm water it carries releases heat into the atmosphere, and in absorbing and storing atmospheric carbon.
6. Low temperature and a high salt content make the water denser, and this dense water sinks deep into the ocean.
7. Cold, dense water slowly spreads southwards, several kilometres below the surface
8. Eventually, it gets pulled back to the surface and warms in a process called “upwelling” and the circulation is complete.

COAL GASIFICATION

Government has awarded Lump Sum Turn Key (LSTK) contract for Coal Gasification Plant PF Talcher Fertilizers Limited to M/s Wuhuan Engineering Co. Ltd, China as a part of measures to revival closed units of Fertilizer Corporation of India Ltd. (FCIL) and Hindustan Fertilizers Corporation Ltd (HFCL).

Benefits of gasification:

1. Transporting gas is a lot cheaper than transporting coal.
2. Address local pollution problems
3. Has greater efficiency than conventional coal-burning because it can effectively use the gases twice: coal gases are first cleansed of impurities and fired in a turbine to generate electricity.

4. Exhaust heat from the gas turbine can be captured and used to generate steam for a steam turbine generator.
5. Concerns and challenges: one of the more water-intensive forms of energy production concerns about water contamination, land subsidence and disposing of waste water safely.
6. Underground coal gasification, involves pumping oxygen and steam through a small borehole into the coal seam to produce a small and controlled combustion
7. Unlike coal-bed methane, therefore, the actual coal is converted from a solid state into gas.
8. Hydrogen, methane, carbon monoxide and CO₂ are then siphoned off through a second borehole.

VACCINE HESITANCY

The World Health Organization (WHO) has included 'vaccine hesitancy' as one of the 10 threats to global health for the year 2019.

1. Vaccine hesitancy means the reluctance or refusal to vaccinate despite the availability of vaccines.
2. Vaccine hesitancy threatens to reverse progress made in tackling vaccinepreventable diseases.
3. Measles, for example, has seen a 30% increase in cases globally in 2018.
4. Some of the reasons why people choose not to vaccinate are: Complacency, inconvenience in accessing vaccines, and lack of confidence
5. Ten threats to global health in 2019 according to WHO are: Air pollution and climate change; Noncommunicable diseases; Global influenza pandemic; Fragile and vulnerable settings; Antimicrobial resistance; Ebola and other high-threat pathogens; Weak primary health care; Vaccine hesitancy; Dengue; HIV

MARGADARSHAN AND MARGADARSHAK SCHEME

Union Human Resource Development Minister has launched the Margadarshan and Margdarshak scheme.

1. Under Margadarshan scheme, institutions having good accreditation records or the top performing institutions are selected to mentor relatively newer 10 to 12 potential institutions.
2. The best teaching and learning practices followed in the mentor institute will be simulated in the identified mentee institutions.
3. The mentee institutions will also be provided with funding up to Rs. 50 lakhs (per institution) over a period of three years (in installments) for carrying out various activities like training, workshops, conferences among others.
4. About Margdarshak scheme, mentor teachers or Margdarshak who are either serving or superannuated but willing and motivated with good knowledge of accreditation and who can devote adequate time to make required visits to these Institutions are identified.
5. These Margdarshaks will regularly visit the mentee institutions, stay on their campus and guide them for their improvement in quality so that institutions are able to get accreditation by NBA.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF OCEAN TECHNOLOGY (NIOT)

1. The National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) was established in November 1993 as an autonomous society under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, Government of India.

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2. The aim of NIOT is to develop reliable indigenous technologies to solve various engineering problems associated with harvesting of non-living and living resources in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) which is about two-thirds of the land area of India.
3. To develop world class technologies and their applications for sustainable utilization of ocean resources.
4. To provide competitive, value added technical services and solutions to organizations working in the oceans.
5. To develop a knowledge base and institutional capabilities in India for management of ocean resources and environment.

TEESTA RIVER WATER DISPUTE

In 2011, the then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was all set to sign a 50:50 Teesta water sharing agreement with Bangladesh when West Bengal Chief Minister Banerjee vetoed the deal on the grounds that West Bengal needed more water from the river.

1. By the Indian Constitution, the central government has the power to sign water sharing treaties with other countries, even though water is a State subject.
2. Sharing the waters of the Teesta river, which originates in the Himalayas and flows through Sikkim and West Bengal to merge with the Brahmaputra/Jamuna in Bangladesh, is perhaps the most contentious issue between India and Bangladesh.
3. The river covers nearly the entire floodplains of Sikkim, while draining 2,800 sq km of Bangladesh, governing the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.
4. For West Bengal, Teesta is equally important, considered the lifeline of half-a-dozen districts in North Bengal.
5. Bangladesh has sought an “equitable” distribution of Teesta waters from India, on the lines of the Ganga Water Treaty of 1996, but to no avail.
6. The Centre has cut down by two years the grace period accorded to hydropower projects on the upper stretches of the Ganga, for complying with environmental-flow requirements.
7. Environmental flows refer to minimum water levels that must be maintained in the river at all times of the year for its health and sustainability as against hydropower projects that frequently dam water in rivers for generating power.

INTERCONNECT USAGE CHARGES (IUC)

The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India’s (TRAI) proposal on deferring the implementation of the zero interconnect usage charges (IUC) regime, if implemented, is likely to benefit Vodafone Idea, as the ailing telco will get some revenue from the interconnect fee.

1. The zero IUC regime was to kick in from January 2020.
2. However, TRAI cited the lack of migration on 4G and the imbalance of off-net traffic between operators as reasons for reconsidering the applicable date.
3. Interconnection usage charges (IUCs) in telecom are the charges paid by a telecom services provider whose subscriber makes a call to the service provider whose subscriber receives the call.
4. The reduction in Interconnection usage charges is likely to yield consumer benefits.

5. Interconnection usage charges (IUCs) work as a disincentive for deployment of new technologies such as VoLTE, or Voice over Long-Term Evolution, and migration to Internet Protocol networks by operators, wherein there are no interconnection charges.

MAHARASHTRA GOVT TO SET UP CLEANLINESS UNIVERSITY

1. The Government of Maharashtra has decided to set up 'Swachh Bharat World University'.
2. The 'Swachh Bharat World University' will be located in Wardha to mark Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary.
3. The university will focus on research, education and finding permanent solutions for cleanliness.
4. This university is being set up despite the Swachh Bharat Mission implementation, rapid urbanisation is generating large amounts of waste which is affecting the health of residents.
5. Swachh Bharat Mission is a cleanliness campaign initiated by Govt. of India in 2014.
6. It seeks to achieve a Clean India by 2019 as a tribute to the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.
7. It has two sub-missions (a) Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) which is implemented by Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation, Jal Shakti Ministry and (b) Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) which is implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

STRATEGIC OIL RESERVES

India may look into its strategic oil reserves after the drone strikes on Saudi Arabian Oil facility have affected the global oil markets.

1. The construction and maintenance of strategic petroleum reserves (SPR) India is given to the Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd (ISPRL).
2. Under Phase I, India has built Strategic oil reserves at Mangalore (Karnataka), Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) and Padur (Karnataka).
3. These reserves can store 5.33 MT (million tonnes) of emergency storage to meet India's oil needs for 9.5 days.
4. In Phase-II, India plans to build an additional 6.5 million tonne facilities at Chandikhol (Odisha) and Padur (Karnataka) which is expected to add the emergency cover against any oil supply disruption by another 11.5 days.
5. Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL) is a Special Purpose Vehicle.
6. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB) under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.

FOREIGN CONTRIBUTION (REGULATION) ACT

Union home ministry has announced several changes in the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010.

1. Government has made it mandatory for each functionary and member of a nongovernmental organization (NGO) seeking registration under FCRA to file an affidavit declaring that the individual has not been involved in any act of religious conversion or prosecuted for communal disharmony.
2. Earlier under the 2011 norms, only top officials had to make this declaration while seeking Ministry of Home affairs permission to receive foreign funds under FCRA.

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3. The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 and rules framed under the FCRA regulate the receipt and usage of foreign contribution by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in India.
4. The objective of the Act is to prevent use of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality for any activity detrimental to the national interest.
5. The act defines the term 'foreign contribution' to include currency, article other than gift for personal use and securities received from foreign sources.
6. The act says that organizations having a definite cultural, economic, educational, religious or social programme are entitled to accept foreign contributions under the FCRA.
7. Such contributions may be accepted only with the approval of the Government of India through the Ministry of Home Affairs.
8. The act also requires non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to register themselves every five years.
9. The act prohibits acceptance and use of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality by certain specified category of persons such as a candidate for election, judge, journalist, columnist, newspaper publication, cartoonist among others.
10. The act also mandates that foreign contributions should be utilized only for the purpose for which they were received.
11. It also imposes restrictions on the transfer of contributions

COASTAL REGULATION ZONES

The Supreme Court has warned Kerala over non-compliance of CRZ notifications. Coastal stretches of seas, bays, estuaries, creeks, rivers, and backwaters were declared as CRZs under coastal zone regulation notification in 1991.

Zones:

1. CRZ-I: includes ecologically sensitive areas, where no construction is allowed except activities for atomic power plants, defense.
2. CRZ-II: includes designated urban areas that are substantially built up. Construction activities are allowed on the landward side only.
3. CRZ-III: includes relatively undisturbed areas, mainly rural areas. No new construction of buildings allowed in this zone except repairing of the existing ones. However, constructions of dwelling units in the plot area lying between 200-500m of the high tide line are allowed.
4. CRZ-IV: includes the water area covered between Low Tide Line and 12 nautical miles seaward. Except for fishing and related activities all actions impugning on the sea and tidal water will be regulated in this zone.

The first CRZ notification was issued in 1991 which has been subsequently amended in 2011 and then 2018. The 2018 notification is based on recommendations of Shailesh Nayak Committee, and is aimed to make CRZs less restrictive to ensure development of coastal areas.

Importance:

1. Protection of coastal ecology which is an important determinant of marine flora and fauna.
2. Protection of interests of coastal communities, particularly fishing communities which depend heavily on marine fauna for livelihood.

3. Protection of coastal ecology is also important determinant of disaster vulnerability from atmospheric and oceanic events such as Tropical cyclones, Tsunamis etc.

PUSA YASHASVI

Recently, the Indian Agricultural Research Institute (IARI) has released a new variety of wheat named Pusa Yashasvi. It is also known as HD-3226.

1. It has higher genetic yield potential (at 79.6 quintals) as compared to other varieties of wheat.
2. Pusa Yashasvi has a higher content of zinc, protein, and gluten (which contributes to the strength and elasticity of the dough).
3. The best feature of this variety of wheat is that it is highly resistant against all major rust fungi viz. yellow/stripe, brown/leaf, and black/stem.
4. It is compliant to the conservation agriculture.
5. Conservation Agriculture (CA) is defined as a sustainable agriculture production system that comprises of a set of farming practices adapted to the requirements of crops and local conditions of each region.
6. The farming and soil management techniques in CA protects the soil from erosion and degradation, improves its quality and biodiversity, and contributes to the preservation of the natural resources, water, and air while optimizing yields.

ANAEMIA

About 60% of female students in Delhi colleges are anaemic — well above the national average — according to an analysis of data.

1. Anaemia is a condition in which the number of red blood cells or their oxygen-carrying capacity is insufficient to meet physiologic needs, which vary by age, sex, altitude, smoking, and pregnancy status.
2. Iron deficiency is thought to be the most common cause of anaemia globally, although other conditions, such as folate, vitamin B12 and vitamin A deficiencies, chronic inflammation, parasitic infections, and inherited disorders can all cause anaemia.
3. In its severe form, it is associated with fatigue, weakness, dizziness and drowsiness. Pregnant women and children are particularly vulnerable.
4. Dairy products (tea, coffee, milk) during or immediately after a meal, decreases absorption of iron by the body.
5. According to National Family Health Survey (NFHS)– IV (2015-16), the prevalence of anaemia among women aged 15 to 49 years is 53%. The steps taken by Government to prevent and treat anaemia amongst women are as follows:
6. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare in 2013 launched “National Iron Plus Initiative” to combat Iron Deficiency Anaemia.
7. POSHAN Abhiyaan aims to reduce anaemia prevalence by 3 percent per year among children, adolescents, women in reproductive age group and pregnant women between the year 2018 and 2022.

PARTICIPATORY GUARANTEE SCHEME (PGS)

CURRENT AFFAIRS-SEPTEMBER 2019

India's food safety regulator has said that Union Agriculture Ministry's Participatory Guarantee Scheme (PGS) should incentivise more farmers to grow organic food.

1. PGS is an internationally applicable organic quality assurance system.
2. Participatory Guarantee System –India (PGS-India) is a decentralised organic farming certification system.
3. The system certifies organic products maintaining the requisite quality standards including ensuring that the cultivation and production process is done complying the standards laid down for organic product.
4. The scheme is implemented by the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, Ministry of Agriculture, Government of India.
5. PGS helps small and marginal farmers to easily get access to organic certification.

PACIFIC ISLANDS DEVELOPING STATES (PSIDS)

Indian Prime Minister has met leaders of the Pacific small Islands Developing States (PSIDS) on the sidelines of the UNGA session in New York, USA. Prime Minister has announced a USD 150 million line of credit to the group of Pacific island nations for undertaking solar, renewable energy and climate related projects based on their requirement.

Small Island Developing States (SIDS):

1. Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are a distinct group of developing countries facing specific social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities.
2. SIDS were recognized as a special case both for their environment and development at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) also known as the Earth Summit.
3. The United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN- OHRLLS) represents this group of states.
4. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs lists 57 small island developing states.
5. SIDS are spread over three geographical regions, namely (a)Caribbean, (b)the Pacific and the Atlantic (c) Indian Ocean (d) Mediterranean and (e)South China Sea.

EXERCISE TIGER TRIUMPH

India and the United States are set to hold their first tri- services exercise codenamed Tiger Triumph at Visakhapatnam and Kakinada in November, 2019.

1. The tri service drill is being organised under the aegis of the headquarters of the Integrated Defence Staff.
2. The exercise will see the participation of a special forces reconnaissance team of the US.
3. The focus of the drill will be on amphibious humanitarian disaster and relief (HADR) operations.
4. This is the first time US and India will be holding the tri- service military exercise.
5. India had earlier conducted such tri-service exercise with Russia.

GramNet

1. The Government today reiterated its commitment in providing Wi-Fi in all the villages through GramNet with connectivity between 10mbps to 100 mbps speed.
2. During the 36th Foundation Day celebrations of Centre for Development of Telematics (C-DOT), Ministry of Communications launched C-DOT's latest innovations-
3. C-Sat-Fi (C-DOT Satellite WiFi)
4. XGSPON (10 G Symmetrical Passive Optical Network)
5. C-DOT's Interoperable Set Top Box (CiSTB).
6. BharatNet Initiative - Provides 1 Gbps speed to Gram Panchayats upgradeable to 10 Gbps

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