



CURRENT AFFAIRS

MARCH 2020

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AMENDMENTS TO THE JUVENILE JUSTICE ACT, 2015

Group of Ministers (GoM) chaired by the Home Minister met to discuss proposed amendments to the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) (JJ) Act, 2015.

- The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 replaced the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 to comprehensively address children in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection.
- The Act changes the nomenclature from 'juvenile' to 'child' or 'child in conflict with law'.
- Also, it removes the negative connotation associated with the word "juvenile".
- It also includes several new and clear definitions such as orphaned, abandoned and surrendered children; and petty, serious and heinous offences committed by children.
- Included special provisions to tackle child offenders committing heinous offences in the age group of 16-18 years.
- It mandates setting up Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees in every district.
- Both must have at least one woman member each.
- A separate new chapter on Adoption to streamline adoption procedures for an orphan, abandoned and surrendered children,
- Also, the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA) was granted the status of a statutory body to enable it to perform its function more effectively.
- The Act included several new offences committed against children (like, illegal adoptions, use of child by militant groups, offences against disabled children, etc) which are not adequately covered under any other law.
- Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill, 2018 provides that instead of the court, the district magistrate will issue adoption orders to address the high pendency of adoption cases.
- The Bill also seeks to transfer all pending matters related to adoption before any court to the district magistrate having jurisdiction over the area.

VISIT OF HOME MINISTER OF MALDIVES

The Home Minister of Maldives, Mr. Sheikh Imran Abdulla, met Indian Home Minister on 21st February, 2020.

- During the meeting, both the ministers discussed issues of mutual interest in the area of security and law enforcement cooperation.
- The Ministers welcomed the expansion of bilateral cooperation between India and Maldives in diverse fields including policing and law enforcement, counter-terrorism, counter-radicalization, organized crime, drug trafficking and capacity building.

- The Directorate of Enforcement will assist Maldives in setting up a probe agency like itself and guide the island nation on raising a Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) infrastructure.
- Maldives (Republic of Maldives) is an independent island country in the north-central Indian Ocean. It consists of a chain of about 1,200 small coral islands and sandbanks (some 200 of which are inhabited), grouped in clusters, or atolls.
- The Maldivian Islands are a series of **coral atolls** built up from the crowns of a submerged ancient volcanic mountain range.

GLOBAL HEALTH SECURITY (GHS) INDEX, 2019

- According to the Global Health Security (GHS) Index, 2019, national health security is “fundamentally weak” around the world. The GHS Index is the first comprehensive assessment and benchmarking of health security and related capabilities across the 195 countries that make up the States Parties to the International Health Regulations (IHR, 2005).
- The GHS Index is a project of the **Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) and the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security (JHU) and was developed with The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).**
- The IHR, 2005 represents an agreement between 196 countries including all the World Health Organization (WHO) Member States to work together for global health security. The GHS Index assesses countries’ health security and capabilities across six categories, 34 indicators, and 85 sub-indicators.

The six categories are as follow:

1. **Prevention:** Prevention of the emergence or release of pathogens.
2. **Detection and Reporting:** Early detection and reporting for epidemics of potential international concern.
3. **Rapid Response:** Rapid response to and mitigation of the spread of an epidemic.
4. **Health System:** Sufficient and robust health system to treat the sick and protect health workers.
5. **Compliance with International Norms:** Commitments to improving national capacity, financing plans to address gaps, and adhering to global norms.
6. **Risk Environment:** Overall risk environment and country vulnerability to biological threats.
 - The US is the “most prepared” nation (scoring 83.5), with the UK (77.9), the Netherlands (75.6), Australia (75.5) and Canada (75.3) behind it.
 - Thailand is ranked sixth in the Index — the highest ranking for an Asian country.
 - India is ranked 57th with a score of 46.5, falling in the middle tier.

Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network (GOARN):

- It is a technical partnership established in 2000 by the World Health Organization (WHO).
- During outbreaks, the Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network ensures that the right technical expertise and are skills are on the ground where and when they are needed most.
- GOARN is a collaboration of existing institutions and networks, constantly alert and ready to respond.
- The network pools human and technical resources for rapid identification, confirmation and response to outbreaks of international importance.

'A FUTURE FOR THE WORLD'S CHILDREN' REPORT

Recently, the **World Health Organization (WHO)**, **UN Children's Fund (UNICEF)** and **The Lancet medical journal** have released 'A Future for the World's Children' report.

- The report calculates the Flourishing Index and Sustainability Index of 180 countries.
- India secures 131st rank on a flourishing index that measures the best chance at survival and well-being for children.
- Further, India ranked 77th on a sustainability index that takes into account per capita carbon emissions and the ability of children in a nation to live healthy lives.
- Flourishing is the geometric mean of Surviving and Thriving.
- The parameter of Surviving considers maternal survival, survival in children younger than 5 years old, suicide, access to maternal and child health services, basic hygiene, sanitation, and lack of extreme poverty.
- The parameter of Thriving considers educational achievement, growth and nutrition, reproductive freedom, and protection from violence.

World Health Assembly:

- The World Health Assembly is the decision-making body of WHO. It is attended by delegations from all WHO Member States and focuses on a specific health agenda prepared by the Executive Board.
- The main functions of the World Health Assembly are to determine the policies of the Organization, appoint the Director-General, supervise financial policies, and review and approve the proposed programme budget. The Health Assembly is held annually in Geneva, Switzerland.

NATIONAL JUDICIAL DATA GRID

- The National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG) is a part of the e-Courts Integrated Mission Mode Project.
- It was launched in 2015. The aim is to track judicial performance across different courts in the country.
- The NJDG is working as National data warehouse for case data including the orders/judgments for Courts across the country. NJDG works as a monitoring tool to identify, manage & reduce pendency of cases. It also helps to provide timely inputs for making policy decisions to reduce delay and arrears in the system, facilitate better monitoring of court performance and systemic bottlenecks, and, thus, facilitate better resource management.

- NJDG has specifically helped India improve its ranking in World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Report.

PAKKE TIGER RESERVE

The Government of Arunachal Pradesh is planning to build a 692.7 km highway through the 862 sq km Pakke Tiger Reserve (PTR) in East Kameng district, Arunachal Pradesh.

- Named the East-West Industrial Corridor, the highway aims to connect Arunachal Pradesh with Assam.
- However, the project makes no mention of compensation for people likely to be displaced.
- It has been argued that corridor will also be a threat to the adjoining Nameri Tiger Reserve in Assam.
- **Pakke Tiger Reserve** (declared in 1999 - 2000) lies in the foothills of the eastern Himalaya in the East Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- It is also known as **Pakhui Tiger Reserve**.
- It falls within the Eastern Himalaya Biodiversity Hotspot.
- It is home to over 2000 species of plants, 300 species of birds, 40 species of mammals, 30 species of amphibians and 36 species of reptiles.

NAMERI TIGER RESERVE

- **Nameri Tiger Reserve** (declared in 1999-2000) is located in the foothills of the eastern Himalayas in the Sonitpur district of the state of **Assam**.
- It is on the interstate border with Arunachal Pradesh.
- The Pakke Tiger Reserve of Arunachal Pradesh adjoins it on its north-eastern point.
- The river **Jia-Bhareli** (a tributary of Brahmaputra River) with its tributaries, the Nameri, Upper Dikorai and Bor Dikorai flow through the Reserve.
- Besides Tiger, the reserve is also home to the sambar, barking deer, wild boar and bison.

MALAI MAHADESHWARA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

- The **Malai Mahadeshwara Wildlife** Sanctuary will be declared as a tiger reserve soon.
- Also, with this notification, Karnataka will have six tiger reserves, the others being **Nagarahole**, **Bhadra**, and Anshi-Dandeli, Bandipur and Biligiri Ranganatha Temple (BRT) Tiger Reserves.
- Malai Mahadeshwara Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the Chamarajanagar district of Karnataka.
- Once notified, Chamarajanagar district of Karnataka will have three tiger reserves.
- It already has Bandipur and BRT Tiger Reserve within its territorial limits.
- It is spread over 906.18 sq km – is contiguous to BRT Tiger Reserve, **Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve** and the **Cauvery Wildlife Sanctuary**.
- The area was declared as Wildlife Sanctuary in 2013.

- It consists mainly of dry deciduous type degrading to scrub forest in the fringe areas, and are interspersed with patches of moist deciduous, semi-evergreen, evergreen and shola forests occurring at varying altitudes.
- Animals including tiger, elephant, leopard, wild dog, bison, sambar, spotted deer, barking deer, sloth bear, wild boar, four-horned antelope, black-naped hare, common langur, bonnet macaque, honey badger (ratel), varieties of reptiles, birds, etc. are found in the wildlife sanctuary.

KALASA-BANDURI NALA PROJECT

- The cost of the Kalasa-Banduri Nala project on the Mahadayi basin has risen from about ₹94 crores (2000) to ₹1,677.30 crores (2020) due to the ongoing inter-State river water dispute.
- Mahadayi or Mhadei, the west-flowing river, originates in Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary (Western Ghats), Belagavi district of Karnataka.
- It is essentially a rain-fed river also called Mandovi in Goa.
- It is joined by a number of streams to form the Mandovi which is one of two major rivers (the other one is Zuari River) that flows through Goa.
- The river travels 35 km in Karnataka; 82 km in Goa before joining the Arabian Sea.
- The Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal was set up in 2010. Goa, Karnataka and Maharashtra are parties to the tribunal.

CMS COP-13

The **UN Environment Programme's (UNEP) 13th Conference of Parties (COP)** on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) concluded in **Gandhinagar** (Gujarat) on 22nd February 2020.

- The mascot for **CMS COP-13** was 'Gibi – The Great Indian Bustard'. It is a critically endangered species (according to the IUCN) and has been accorded the highest protection status (listed in Schedule I) under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- The CMS COP-13 has adopted the **Gandhi Nagar Declaration** which calls for migratory species and the concept of 'ecological connectivity' to be integrated and prioritized in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.
- Ten migratory species were added to CMS Appendices at COP-13 including the Asian Elephant, Jaguar and Great Indian Bustard.
- In order to protect the migratory species throughout their range countries, a Convention on Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS), has been in force since 1983, under the aegis of United Nations Environment Programme.
- India is a temporary home to several migratory animals and birds. The important among these include Amur Falcons, Bar-headed Geese, Black-necked cranes, Marine turtles, Dugongs, Humpbacked Whales, etc.

Central Asian Flyway:

1. It covers a large continental area of Eurasia between the Arctic and Indian Oceans and the associated island chains.
2. Geographically the flyway region covers **30 countries of North, Central and South Asia and Trans-Caucasus**
3. The Flyway comprises several important migration routes of waterbirds, most of which extend from the northernmost breeding grounds in the Russian Federation (Siberia) to the southernmost non-breeding (wintering) grounds in West and South Asia, the Maldives and the British Indian Ocean Territory.
4. The Indian sub-continent is also part of the major bird flyway network, i.e, the **Central Asian Flyway (CAF)** that covers areas between the Arctic and Indian Oceans, and covers at least 279 populations of 182 migratory water-bird species, including 29 globally threatened species.

- India has launched the National Action Plan for the conservation of migratory species under the Central Asian Flyway”.

MUKUNDARA HILLS TIGER RESERVE

- The Mukundra Tiger Reserve (TR) is located near Kota, Rajasthan.
- The park is situated in a valley formed by two parallel mountains viz. Mukundra and Gargola.
- The 4 rivers (Ramzan, Ahu, Kali and Chambal) form the boundary of the valley.
- It is located on the eastern bank of the Chambal River and is drained by its tributaries.
- The **Mukundra Hills** was declared a Wildlife Sanctuary in 1955 and a National Park (Mukundra Hills (Darrah) National Park) in 2004.
- It was notified as a Tiger Reserve (2013) under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 and became the 3rd Tiger Reserve of Rajasthan in the form of the Mukundra Hills Tiger Reserve.
- Other Tiger Reserves in Rajasthan: Ranthambore and Sariska.

NATIONAL TECHNICAL TEXTILES MISSION

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved the setting up of a **National Technical Textiles Mission** at a total outlay of ₹1,480 crores.

- It aims to position the country as a global leader in technical textiles and increase the use of technical textiles in the domestic market.
- The Mission will aim at taking domestic market size to \$40 billion to \$50 billion by 2024.
- It is estimated at \$16 billion which is approximately 6% of the \$250 billion global technical textiles market.
- The penetration level of technical textiles in India varies between 5% and 10% against the level of 30% to 70% in developed countries.
- Technical textiles are **functional fabrics** that have applications across various industries including **automobiles, civil engineering and construction, agriculture, healthcare, industrial safety, personal protection** etc.

ANALYSIS OF WATER IN ULSOOR LAKE

- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the constitution of a joint committee to take samples of water from Bengaluru’s Ulsoor lake and neighbouring areas.
- It has been reported that the water quality has come down due to illegal activities being carried out while discharging untreated sewage, effluents and the dumping of garbage into the water body.

Biochemical Oxygen Demand

- BOD is the amount of dissolved oxygen used by microorganisms in the biological process of metabolizing organic matter in water.

- The more organic matter there is (e.g., in sewage and polluted bodies of water), the greater the BOD; and the greater the BOD, the lower the amount of dissolved oxygen available for higher animals such as fishes.
- The BOD is therefore a reliable gauge of the organic pollution of a body of water.
- One of the main reasons for treating wastewater prior to its discharge into a water resource is to lower its BOD—i.e., reduce its need of oxygen and thereby lessen its demand from the streams, lakes, rivers, or estuaries into which it is released.

Chemical Oxygen Demand

- COD is a method of estimating how much oxygen would be depleted from a body of receiving water as a result of bacterial action.
- Water pollution caused by fecal contamination is a serious problem due to the potential for contracting diseases from pathogens (disease causing organisms).
- The presence of pathogens in the water is determined with indirect evidence by testing for an "indicator" organism such as coliform bacteria.
- Coliforms are bacteria that are always present in the digestive tracts of animals, including humans, and are found in their wastes.
- They are also found in plant and soil material.
- Presence of any heavy metals like Arsenic, Phosphorus, etc:
- Heavy metals are known to induce cardiovascular diseases, developmental abnormalities, neurologic and neurobehavioral disorders, diabetes, hearing loss, hematologic and immunologic disorders.
- Studies have shown that toxic heavy metals can interfere with absorption and use of nutritionally essential metals such as iron, calcium, copper, and zinc.

NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

- NGT was established in the year 2010 under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010.
- Effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.
- Enforcement of any legal right relating to environment.
- Giving relief and compensation for damages to persons and property and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- It is a specialized body equipped with the necessary expertise to handle environmental disputes involving multi-disciplinary issues.
- The Tribunal is guided by principles of natural justice.

INDIA AND MYANMAR INK VARIOUS PACTS

India and Myanmar signed 10 agreements with a focus on socio-economic development of Myanmar, during Myanmar President U Win Myint's visit to India.

- Myanmar stands at the confluence of India's Neighbourhood First and Act East Policy and India-Myanmar partnership is at the heart of India's vision to create a connected and cooperative neighbourhood.
- The two countries will start a coordinated bus service between Manipur's **Imphal** and Myanmar's Mandalay from April 2020.
- India will assist Myanmar in the construction of Integrated Check Point at Tamu, Myanmar, bordering Manipur.
- The two countries signed the Land Border Crossing Agreement in 2018, which allowed bona fide travellers with valid documents to cross the border at two international points of entry/exit- Moreh-Tamu and Zokhawathar-Rih.
- India signed a development programme for Rakhine State in Myanmar in late 2017 which was designed to assist the Myanmar government in Rakhine State to build housing infrastructure for displaced Rohingyas.
- India had committed \$25 million grant assistance to Myanmar and phase-I involved completion of 250 prefabricated houses in **Rakhine State**.
- India will also support the establishment of Myanmar's diplomatic academy, and extend the National Knowledge Network to Myanmar.
- Both countries have decided to extend the Quick Impact Project schemes to Myanmar.
- Under this, India will take up capacity development work in the form of small projects which yield quick beneficial results for the local people.
- Both sides agreed to work together to promote principles of openness, inclusiveness, transparency, respect for international law and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) centrality in Indo-Pacific.
- India will offer medical radiation equipment Bhabhatron II for the treatment of cancer patients and strengthen cooperation in the health sector.
- Both countries agreed to have government-to-government cooperation in petroleum, including in refinery, stockpiling, blending and retail.
- In governance, India will help Myanmar with the project of e-ID cards, which is modelled after the Aadhaar project.
- The two sides showed commitment to continue negotiations on pending treaties like Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) and Extradition Treaty.
- An MoU has also been signed on 'Cooperation for Prevention of Trafficking in Persons; Rescue, Recovery, Repatriation and Re-Integration of Victims of Trafficking' between the two countries.

Name of the country	Length of the border (in Km)
Bangladesh	4,096.7
China	3,488
Pakistan	3,323
Nepal	1,751
Myanmar	1,643
Bhutan	699
Afghanistan	106
Total	15,106.7



Rohingyas:

- **Rohingya** are an ethnic group, largely comprising Muslims, who predominantly live in the Western Myanmar province of **Rakhine**.
- They speak a dialect of Bengali, as opposed to the commonly spoken Burmese language.
- The **Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA)**, a group previously known as Harakah al-Yaqin, is an insurgent group.
- Burma was separated from the rest of the Indian Empire in 1937, just ten years before India became an independent country, in 1947.

HENNEGUYA SALMINICOLA

- Scientists have discovered an animal Henneguya Salminicola which does not need oxygen to produce the energy needed for its survival.
- It is a tiny, less than 10-celled parasite which lives in the muscles of salmon fish. It does not have a mitochondrial genome.
- Mitochondria is the “powerhouse” of the cell, which captures oxygen to make energy.
- Its absence indicates that the parasite does not breathe oxygen.
- It is a relative of jellyfish and corals and as it evolved, it gave up breathing and consuming oxygen or became anaerobic to produce energy.
- However, it is not yet clear how the parasite generates energy. It may be drawing it from the surrounding fish cells or it may have a different type of respiration such as oxygen-free breathing, which typically characterises anaerobic nonanimal organisms like fungi, amoebas or ciliate lineages.
- The discovery bears enormous significance for evolutionary research.
- Aerobic respiration was thought to be prevalent in animals but now it is confirmed that animals can survive with anaerobic respiration.

RED CROWNED ROOFED TURTLE

- **Red Crowned Roofed Turtle** is one of the 24 species endemic to India, is characterised by the bright colours such as red, yellow, white and blue on the faces and necks of the males. **Common Names: Bengal roof turtle, Red-crowned roofed turtle.**
- It is a **freshwater turtle species** found in deep flowing rivers with terrestrial nesting sites.
- The Red-crowned roofed turtle is native to India, Bangladesh and Nepal.
- Historically, the species was widespread in the **Ganga River, both in India and Bangladesh.**
- It also occurs in the Brahmaputra basin.
- Currently in India, the National Chambal River Gharial Sanctuary is the only area with substantial population of the species, but even this Protected Area and habitat are under threat.

ABOUT THE E-WASTE (MANAGEMENT) RULES, 2016

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change notified the **E-Waste Management Rules, 2016** in supersession of the **e-waste (Management & Handling) Rules, 2011.**

- The new E-waste rules included Compact Fluorescent Lamp (CFL) and other mercury containing lamps, as well as other such equipment.
- For the first time, the rules brought the producers under **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**, along with targets.
- Producers have been made responsible for the collection of E-waste and for its exchange.
- Various producers can have a separate Producer Responsibility Organisation (PRO) and ensure collection of E-waste, as well as its disposal in an environmentally sound manner.
- Deposit Refund Scheme has been introduced as an additional economic instrument wherein the producer charges an additional amount as a deposit at the time of sale of the electrical and electronic equipment and returns it to the consumer along with interest when the end-of-life electrical and electronic equipment is returned.
- The role of State Governments has been also introduced to ensure safety, health and skill development of the workers involved in dismantling and recycling operations.
- A provision of penalty for violation of rules has also been introduced.
- Urban Local Bodies (Municipal Committee/Council/Corporation) has been assigned the duty to collect and channelize the orphan products to authorized dismantler or recycler.

MAC BINDING

The authorities have removed ban on social media and restored full internet access in Kashmir on 4th March 2020.

- Among various conditions, the Internet connectivity will be made available **“with macbinding”**.
- Every device has a Media Access Control (MAC) address, a hardware identification number that is unique to it. While accessing the Internet, every device is assigned an Internet Protocol (IP) address.
- This forces a particular device to access the internet from a specific IP address.

- If either the MAC (Media Access Control) address or the IP address changes, the device will not be able to access the internet.
- MAC-binding will also enable authorities to trace a device on the basis of its online activity.
- Address that uniquely defines a hardware interface is called MAC (Media Access Control) Address. It identifies the physical address of a computer on the internet.
- It is 48 bits (6 bytes) hexadecimal address.
- MAC Address of each computer on a network is unique.

GAURA DEVI

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is celebrating Women's Week from 1st March to 8th March 2020.
- The International Women's Day is observed on 8th March every year.
- MHRD remembered the women of history who have made significant contributions in the past and planted a sapling in memory of Gaura Devi, a Chipko Activist.
- The **Chipko movement** was a non-violent agitation in 1973 that was aimed at protection and conservation of trees.
- It is best remembered for the collective mobilisation of women for the cause of preserving forests, which also brought about a change in attitude regarding their own status in society.
- The uprising against the felling of trees and maintaining the ecological balance originated in **Uttar Pradesh's Chamoli district (now Uttarakhand) in 1973** and in no time spilled onto other states in north India.
- The name of the movement 'chipko' comes from the word 'embrace', as the villagers hugged the trees and encircled them to prevent being hacked.

RED SNOW

- "Red snow" is a phenomenon that has been known since ancient times. It is the algae that give the snow its red tinge.
- This algae species *Chlamydomonas nivalis*, exists in snow in the polar and glacial regions, and carries a red pigment to keep itself warm.
- Red snow causes the surrounding ice to melt faster. The more the algae packed together, the redder the snow.
- And the darker the tinge, the more the heat absorbed by the snow. Subsequently, the ice melts faster which is bad for glaciers.
- These algae change the snow's albedo — which refers to the amount of light or radiation the snow surface is able to reflect back. Changes in albedo lead to more melting.

- **Algae** are a diverse group of aquatic organisms that have the ability to conduct photosynthesis.
- **Example:** seaweeds (such as kelp or phytoplankton), pond scum or the algal blooms in lakes.

BUNDELKHAND EXPRESSWAY

- PM Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the 296-kilometres long Bundelkhand Expressway at Chitrakoot.
- This will supplement the nodes of the Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor, announced in February 2018.
- To be built at a cost of Rs 14,849 crore, the Expressway is expected to benefit Chitrakoot, Banda, Mahoba, Hamirpur, Jalaun, Auraiya and Etawah districts.
- Bundelkhand is a geographical and cultural region divided between the states of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Jhansi and Khajuraho are well known places in Bundelkhand.

KALLAKKADAL

The **Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services** (Incois), Hyderabad, has launched three ocean-based specialised products/services — the Small Vessel Advisory and Forecast Services System (SVAS), the **Swell Surge Forecast System** (SSFS) and the **Algal Bloom Information Service** (ABIS).

- Swell Surge Forecast System is designed for the prediction of Kallakkadal/Swell Surge that occurs along the Indian coast, particularly the west coast.
- **Kallakkadal** is a colloquial term used by Kerala fishermen to refer to the freaky flooding episodes and in 2012 UNESCO formally accepted this term for scientific use.
- Kallakkadal are caused by meteorological conditions in the Southern Ocean, south of 30°S.
- Kallakadal/Swell surge are flash-flood events that take place without any noticeable advance change in local winds or any other apparent signature in the coastal environment. Such events are intermittent throughout the year.
- **Small Vessel Advisory and Forecast Services System (SVAS)**: an advisory and forecast service system for small vessels operating in Indian coastal waters
- Warning system is based on the '**Boat Safety Index**' (BSI) derived from wave model forecast outputs such as significant wave height, wave steepness, directional spread and the rapid development of wind at sea which is boat-specific.
- **Algal Bloom Information Service (ABIS)**: INCOIS-ABIS will provide near-real time information on spatio-temporal occurrence and spread of phytoplankton blooms over the North Indian Ocean.
- In addition, four regions have been identified as bloom hotspots viz. a) North Eastern Arabian Sea b) coastal waters off Kerala c) Gulf of Mannar and d) coastal waters of Gopalpur.
- INCOIS, an autonomous organisation under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, provides a number of free services for users in the marine realm, including fishermen.

PRIME MINISTER'S EMPLOYMENT GENERATION PROGRAMME (PMEGP)

- Government of India held a Meeting to review the Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP), a flagship scheme of the Ministry of MSME.

- PMEGP is a credit linked subsidy scheme which promotes self-employment through setting up of micro enterprises, where subsidy up to 35 percent is provided by the Government through Ministry of MSME for loans up to Rs. 25 lakhs in manufacturing and Rs 10 lakhs in service sector.
- Target in the current year has been increased to support the establishments of 80,000 units.

INDIA-MYANMAR RELATIONS

President of Myanmar, U Win Myint, paid a State Visit to India from 26 to 29 February 2020. Both sides signed 10 agreements in various fields such as:

- MoU on Cooperation for Prevention of Trafficking in Persons
- MoU for Cooperation on Combating Timber Trafficking, and Conservation of Tigers and other Wildlife
- Agreement regarding Indian Grant Assistance for Implementation of Quick Impact Projects (QIP)
- MoU for cooperation in the field of petroleum products
- Project Agreement for construction of preschools under Rakhine State Development Programme
- India reiterated its support for peace, stability and development in Rakhine state.
- Coordinated Bus Service between Imphal and Mandalay is expected to begin from April this year.
- Indian side reiterated its commitment for construction of the Integrated Check Post in Tamu, Myanmar.

G SRINIVASAN COMMITTEE

The **Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)** has set up a nine-member committee under Chairmanship of G Srinivasan (former CMD of New India Assurance) to study the feasibility of allowing life insurers to offer indemnity-based health policies.

- As of now, only general insurance firms and specialised health insurance companies are allowed to offer indemnity-based health policies.
- IRDAI (Health Insurance) Regulations 2016 allow life insurance companies to offer benefit based health insurance products only.
- IRDAI move follows intense lobbying by private life insurance companies for an entry into the fast-growing health insurance segment.
- In an indemnity-based health insurance plan, the policyholder is reimbursed the cost of medical expenses.
- These plans will reimburse the policyholder with the actual amount incurred as expenses during a hospitalisation stay up to the sum insured under the policy.

DONALD TRUMP'S VISIT TO INDIA

The President of the United States of America, Donald Trump, paid a State Visit to India on 24-25 February 2020.

- PM Modi decided to elevate ties between their countries to a “comprehensive global strategic partnership”
- They looked forward to “early conclusion” of defence cooperation enabling agreements including Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA).
- Expressed interest in the concept of the Blue Dot Network, a multistakeholder initiative that will bring governments, the private sector, and civil society together to promote high-quality trusted standards for global infrastructure development”.
- Added Haqqani network and Tehrik-e-Taliban in Pakistan (TTP) to the list of terror groups against whom they “called for concerted action”.
- India will purchase more than \$3 billion of advanced American military equipment, including 24 multi-role MH-60 Romeo helicopters through the Foreign Military Sale government-to-government route, and six Apache AH 64E Apache helicopters for the Army
- Six choppers for the Army will be in addition to the 22 Apache helicopters that have already been ordered for the Air Force.
- MH-60 Romeo Seahawk, made by Lockheed Martin, can not only track and hunt ships, but is also used by the US Navy as anti-submarine weapon.
- MoU was signed on mental health between the health departments of both the two countries.
- MoU on the safety of medical products was signed between the Central Drugs Standard Control Organization with the US Food and Drug Administration
- A Letter of Cooperation was signed between Indian Oil Corporation Limited and Exxon Mobil India LNG Limited and Chart Industries Inc, US.

SUPOSHIT MAA ABHIYAN

- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla launched "**Suposhit Maa Abhiyan**" to provide nutritional support to pregnant women and adolescent girls in Kota.
- Keeping newborn and pregnant women healthy is the main objective
- Under this Abhiyan, 1,000 women would be given food items for one month. At the same time, the health of the child, including medical examination, blood tests, medicines, delivery, would be covered.
- Identified women would be required to register on a website for adoption. Only one pregnant woman would be adopted from a family.
- In the first phase of the campaign, 1,000 kits of 17 kg balanced diet each were provided to 1,000 pregnant women.

CENTRAL CONSUMER PROTECTION AUTHORITY

- The government is all set to establish a Central Consumer Protection Authority, under Section 10(1) of The Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

- It will be aimed at protecting the rights of the consumer by cracking down on unfair trade practices, and false and misleading advertisements that are detrimental to the interests of the public and consumers.

Powers and Functions:

- Inquire or investigate into matters relating to violations of consumer rights or unfair trade practices suo motu, or on a complaint received, or on a direction from the central government.
- Recall goods or withdrawal of services that are “dangerous, hazardous or unsafe.
- Pass an order for refund the prices of goods or services so recalled to purchasers of such goods or services; discontinuation of practices which are unfair and prejudicial to consumer’s interest”.
- Impose a penalty up to Rs 10 lakh, with imprisonment up to two years, on the manufacturer or endorser of false and misleading advertisements. The penalty may go up to Rs 50 lakh, with imprisonment up to five years, for every subsequent offence committed by the same manufacturer or endorser.
- Ban the endorser of a false or misleading advertisement from making endorsement of any products or services in the future, for a period that may extend to one year.
- The ban may extend up to three years in every subsequent violation of the Act.
- File complaints of violation of consumer rights or unfair trade practices before the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, and the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission.
- It will have a Chief Commissioner as head, and only two other commissioners as members — one of whom will deal with matters relating to goods while the other will look into cases relating to services.
- The CCPA will have an Investigation Wing that will be headed by a Director General. District Collectors too, will have the power to investigate complaints of violations of consumer rights, unfair trade practices, and false or misleading advertisements.
- For manufacture, selling, storage, distribution, or import of adulterated products, the penalties are: If injury is not caused to a consumer, fine up to Rs 1 lakh with imprisonment up to six months. If injury is caused, fine up to Rs 3 lakh with imprisonment up to one year. If grievous hurt is caused, fine up to Rs 5 lakh with imprisonment up to 7 years.
- In case of death, fine of Rs 10 lakh or more with a minimum imprisonment of 7 years, extendable to imprisonment for life.

MASALA BONDS

- **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** has listed its 10-year masala bonds worth Rs 850 crore on the global debt listing platform of India INX.
- The proceeds would be used to support local currency lending and investment in India.
Background
- **India INX** is the country’s first international exchange, located at International Financial Services Centre, GIFT City in Gujarat. ADB’s masala bonds are listed on both Luxembourg exchange and **India INX**.

- They are bonds issued outside India by an Indian entity or corporate. These bonds are issued in Indian currency than local currency. Indian corporates usually issue Masala Bonds to raise funds from foreign investors.
- As it is pegged into Indian currency, if the rupee rates fall, investors bear the risk. The first Masala bond was issued in 2014 by IFC for the infrastructure projects in India.
- As Masala bonds are issued directly in Indian rupees, the investor needs to bear the exchange rate risks. Rupee rate falls will not affect the issuer of Masala Bonds. In simpler words, as Masala Bonds are rupee-denominated bonds, the risk goes directly to the investor.
- Investors from outside of India who would like to invest in Indian assets can invest in Masala bonds. Indian entities like HDFC, NTPC and Indiabulls Housing have raised funds via Masala Bonds.

Asian Development Bank (ADB):

1. It envisions a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty in the region.
2. ADB assists its members, and partners, by providing loans, technical assistance, grants, and equity investments to promote social and economic development.
3. From 31 members at its establishment in 1966, ADB has grown to encompass 68 members of which 49 are from **within** Asia and the Pacific and 19 **outside**. **ADB is headquartered at Mandaluyong, Philippines.**

RARE DISEASE DAY

- **Rare Disease Day** is observed on February 29.
- A rare disease, also referred to as an **orphan disease**, is any disease that affects a small percentage of the population.
- Most rare diseases are genetic, and are present throughout a person's entire life, even if symptoms do not immediately appear.
- The most common rare diseases recorded in India are Haemophilia, Thalassemia, sickle-cell anaemia and primary immuno deficiency in children, auto-immune diseases, Lysosomal storage disorders such as Pompe disease, Hirschsprung disease, Gaucher's disease, Cystic Fibrosis, Hemangiomas and certain forms of muscular dystrophies.
- As per the 2017 report, over 50 per cent of new cases are reported in children and these diseases are responsible for 35 per cent of deaths in those below the age of one, 10 per cent of deaths between the ages of one and five, and 12 per cent between five and 15.
- The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, in January this year, published a national policy for the treatment of 450 'rare diseases'. The Centre first prepared such a policy in 2017 and appointed a committee in 2018 to review it.
- The policy intends to kick-start a registry of rare diseases, which will be maintained by the **Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)**.

- Under the policy, there are three categories of rare diseases — requiring one-time curative treatment, diseases that require long-term treatment but where the cost is low, and those needing long-term treatments with high cost. Some of the diseases in the first category include osteopetrosis and immune deficiency disorders, among others.
- As per the policy, the assistance of Rs 15 lakh will be provided to patients suffering from rare diseases that require a one-time curative treatment under the **Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi** scheme. The treatment will be limited to the beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Jan **Arogya Yojana**.

RAIDER-X

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore have developed a new bomb detection device called Raider-X.
- It is an explosives detection device. It can detect up to 20 explosives from a stand-off distance of two meters.
- Developed by the High Energy Material Research Laboratory (HEMRL) — an arm of the DRDO — in Pune and the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore. It can also discern bulk explosives even if they have been concealed.
- The device has various applications including narcotics, for local police, for customs and other detection agencies who need to detect various elements which may be explosive or non-explosive in nature.
- Most of the recent terrorist attacks had explosives that were made from easily available ingredients like petrol and gelatin sticks rather than high-end materials.
- And devices like Raider-X are incremental to thwarting the threat from homemade explosives.

EURASIAN OTTER

- IUCN Red List: Near Threatened, Protection: CITES: Appendix I, Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972: Schedule II.
- Found throughout Europe and in Asia. In India, the species is distributed in the Himalayan foothills, southern Western Ghats and the central Indian landscape.
- Spotted in Chilika Lake.

About Chilika Lake:

- Chilika Lake is India's largest brackish water lagoon. **Ansupa** is Odisha's largest freshwater lake.
- It is spread across the districts of **Puri, Khurda** and **Ganjam** in the state of Odisha.
- Chilika Lake is fed by 52 rivers and rivulets during summers and monsoon respectively.
- Chilika Lake is connected to the Bay of Bengal by a 32 km long and 1.5 km wide channel.
- A number of islands are present in the lagoon, prominent among which are Krushnaprasad, **Nalaban**, Kalijai, Somolo and Birds Islands.
- In 1981, Chilika Lake was designated the first Indian wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.
- Major attraction at Chilika is Irrawady dolphins which are often spotted off Satpada Island.
- The large Nalabana Island (Forest of Reeds) covering about 16 sq km in the lagoon area was declared a bird sanctuary in 1987.
- The **Kaliyai Temple** is located on an island in the Chilika Lake.

PRADHAN MANTRI LAGHU VYAPARI MAAN-DHAN YOJANA

- Under performance of National Pension Scheme for Traders, Shopkeepers and Self-Employed Persons. Just over 34,000 people have signed up so far.
- The Labour Ministry's vision document in 2019 had set a target of 25 lakh enrolments for the scheme in 2019-2020.
- It is a voluntary and contribution based central sector scheme. The government launched the scheme, entailing monthly minimum assured pension of ₹3,000 for the entry age group of 18-40 years after attaining the age of 60 years, with effect from July 22, 2019.
- Under the scheme, the government makes matching contribution in the subscribers' account. The scheme is based on self-declaration as no documents are required except bank account and Aadhaar Card.
- All small shopkeepers, self-employed persons and retail traders aged between 18-40 years and with Goods and Service Tax (GST) turnover below Rs.1.5 crore can enrol for pension scheme.
- To be eligible, the applicants should not be covered under the National Pension Scheme, Employees' State Insurance Scheme and the Employees' Provident Fund or be an Income Tax assessee.
- Benefits to the family on death of an eligible subscriber: During the receipt of pension, if an eligible subscriber dies, his spouse shall be only entitled to receive fifty per cent. of the pension received by such eligible subscriber, as family pension and such family pension shall be applicable only to the spouse.

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST

- Government of India has submitted two nomination dossiers namely 'Dholavira: A Harappan City' and 'Monuments and Forts of Deccan Sultanate' for inclusion in the World Heritage List for the year 2020.

NATIONAL INTERLINKING OF RIVERS AUTHORITY (NIRA)

The Central government is working on the establishment of an exclusive body to implement projects for linking rivers- To be called the National Interlinking of Rivers Authority (NIRA). It is expected to take up both inter-State and intra-State projects. It will also make arrangements for generating funds, internally and externally.

About National River Linking Project (NRLP):

- The NRLP formally known as the National Perspective Plan, envisages the transfer of water from water 'surplus' basins where there is flooding to water 'deficit' basins where there is drought/scarcity, through inter-basin water transfer projects.
- It is designed to ease water shortages in western and southern India while mitigating the impacts of recurrent floods in the eastern parts of the Ganga basin.

- ILR Projects in India: As of now, six ILR projects — the Ken-Betwa, Damanganga- Pinjal, Par-Tapi-Narmada, Manas-Sankosh-TeestaGanga, Mahanadi-Godavari and Godavari-Cauvery (Grand Anicut) — have been under examination of the authorities.
- With regard to the peninsular rivers, the Centre has chosen to focus on the Godavari-Cauvery link than the earlier proposal to link the Mahanadi-Godavari-Krishna-Pennar-Cauvery Rivers.

SUKHNA LAKE IS A LIVING ENTITY

The Punjab and Haryana high court has declared **Sukhna Lake** a “living entity” or “legal person” with rights, duties and liabilities of a living person. It also declared all citizens of Chandigarh as loco parentis (in the place of a parent) to save the lake from extinction.

- Sukhna Lake will now be a legal entity for its survival, preservation and conservation.
- The Chandigarh administration has been directed to declare it a wetland within a period of three months.
- All structures in Sukhna’s catchment area (which was demarcated by the Survey of India in 2004) should be demolished, and affected owners whose building plans have been approved should be relocated in the vicinity of Chandigarh and they should be compensated with ₹25 lakh each.
- Chandigarh should ensure that the average capacity of the lake is increased by at least about 100-150 hectare by one-time large scale desilting.
- Punjab, Haryana and Chandigarh have also been told to lower the storage capacity of the check dams to ensure regular flow of water into the lake.
- Chandigarh will have to ensure that there is no seepage losses.
- The aquatic weeds are ordered to be removed within a period of six months.
- Polluter pays principle: Invoking the ‘polluter pays’ principle of environmental law, the Court said in its order: “The States should have taken precautionary measures to save the catchment of Sukhna lake. It is the duty of the States of Punjab and Haryana to restore the catchment area.
- The State government has also failed to take precautionary measures to save the catchment area. The damage caused to the catchment area is enormous.”

PRADHAN MANTRI BHARTIYA JANAUSHADHI PARIYOJANA (PMBJP)

- ‘Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana’ is a campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. Of India, to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses through special kendra’s known as **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi** Kendra.

Salient features of the scheme:

- Ensure access to quality medicines.
- Extend coverage of quality generic medicines so as to reduce the out of pocket expenditure on medicines and thereby redefine the unit cost of treatment per person.

- Create awareness about generic medicines through education and publicity so that quality is not synonymous with only high price.
- Create demand for generic medicines by improving access to better healthcare through low treatment cost and easy availability wherever needed in all therapeutic categories.
- There is no definition of generic or branded medicines under the Drugs & Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules, 1945 made thereunder. However, generic medicines are generally those which contain same amount of same active ingredient(s) in same dosage form and are intended to be administered by the same route of administration as that of branded medicine.

NATIONAL COMPANY LAW APPELLATE TRIBUNAL (NCLAT)

- Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) was constituted under Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013 for hearing appeals against the orders of National Company Law Tribunal(s) (NCLT), with effect from 1st June, 2016.
- It is also the appellate tribunal for hearing appeals against orders passed by NCLT(s) under Section 61 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC), the Competition Commission of India (CCI).
- **Composition:** Chief Justice of India or his nominee- Chairperson, A senior judge of the Supreme Court or a Chief Justice of High Court, Secretary in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Secretary in the Ministry of Law and Justice, Secretary in the Department of Financial Services.
- **Appeal:** NCLAT decisions can be challenged in the Supreme Court on a point of law.

NATIONAL ANTI-PROFITEERING AUTHORITY (NAPA)

The National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA) has been constituted under Section 171 of the **Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017**.

- It is to ensure the reduction in rate of tax or the benefit of input tax credit is passed on to the recipient by way of commensurate reduction in prices.
- The Authority's core function is to ensure that the benefits of the reduction in GST rates on goods and services made by GST Council and proportional change in the Input tax credit passed on to the ultimate consumers and recipient respectively by way of reduction in the prices by the suppliers.
- The National Anti-profiteering Authority shall be headed by a senior officer of the level of a Secretary to the Government of India and shall have four technical members from the Centre and/or the States.
- Powers and functions of the authority: In the event the National Anti-profiteering Authority confirms the necessity of applying anti-profiteering measures, it has the power to order the business concerned to reduce its prices or return the undue benefit availed along with interest to the recipient of the goods or services.
- In extreme cases the National Anti-profiteering Authority can impose a penalty on the defaulting business entity and even order the cancellation of its registration under GST.

MERGER OF BANKS

- In the biggest consolidation exercise in the banking space, the government in August 2019 had announced four major mergers of public sector banks, bringing down their total number to 12 from 27 in 2017, a move aimed at making state-owned lenders global sized banks.
- The scheme for the amalgamation of 10 state-owned banks into four.
- New mergers include: Punjab National Bank, Oriental Bank of Commerce and United Bank of India will combine to form the nation's second-largest lender.
- Canara Bank and Syndicate Bank will be merged.
- Union Bank of India will be amalgamated with Andhra Bank and Corporation Bank.
- Indian Bank will be merged with Allahabad Bank.

GAIRSAIN

- Uttarakhand Chief Minister named Gairsain as the new summer capital of the state, partially fulfilling an over two-decade demand by statehood crusaders to make it the permanent capital.
- Gairsain is a town and Nagar Panchayat in Chamoli district, Uttarakhand
- Situated at the eastern edge of the Dudhatoli mountain range
- Uttarakhand was carved out as a separate state from Uttar Pradesh in 1998.
- State Assembly is located in Dehradun, but sessions are held in Gairsain as well.

SCHEMES/POLICIES FOR MINORITIES IN VARIOUS STATES

- **Maulana Azad National Fellowship Scheme** – Provide fellowships in the form of financial assistance.
- **Naya Savera** – Free Coaching and Allied Scheme – The Scheme aims to provide free coaching to students/candidates belonging to minority communities for qualifying in entrance examinations of technical/ professional courses and Competitive examinations.
- **Padho Pardesh** – Scheme of interest subsidy to students of minority communities on educational loans for overseas higher studies.
- **Nai Udaan** – Support for students clearing Prelims conducted by Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), State Public Service Commission (PSC) Staff Selection Commission (SSC) etc.
- **Nai Roshni** – Leadership development of women belonging to minority communities.
- **Seekho Aur Kamao** – Skill development scheme for youth of 14 – 35 years age group and aiming at improving the employability of existing workers, school dropouts etc.
- **Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram** (PMJVK) restructured in May 2018 earlier known as MsDP – Implemented for the benefit of the people from all sections of the society in identified Minority Concentration Areas for creation of assets in education, skill and health sectors.
- **Jiyo Parsi** – Scheme for containing population decline of Parsis in India.

- USTTAD (Upgrading the Skills and Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development) launched in May 2015.
- **Nai Manzil** – A scheme for formal school education & skilling of school dropouts launched in Aug. 2015.
- Hamari Dharohar- A scheme to preserve rich heritage of minority communities of India under the overall concept of Indian culture implemented since 2014-15.

SWAP RATIO

- Eight state-owned banks have announced swap ratios for the proposed mergers.
- Swap ratio is the ratio at which an acquiring company will offer its own shares in exchange for the target company's shares during a merger or acquisition.
- To calculate the swap ratio, companies analyze financial ratios such as book value, earnings per share, profits after tax, and dividends paid, as well as other factors, such as the reasons for the merger or acquisition.
- The current market prices of the target and acquiring company's stock are compared along with their respective financial situations.
- A ratio is when configured which states the rate at which the target company's shareholders will receive acquiring company shares of stock for every one share of target company stock they currently hold.

DELIMITATION OF CONSTITUENCIES

- The government has constituted a **Delimitation Commission**, to be headed by former Supreme Court judge **Ranjana Prakash Desai**, to redraw Lok Sabha and assembly constituencies of the Union Territory Jammu and Kashmir and the north-eastern states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland.
- The Commission will delimit the constituencies of Jammu and Kashmir in accordance with the provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, and of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland in accordance with the provisions of the Delimitation Act, 2002. (under article 82)
- Delimitation literally means the process of fixing limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies in a state that has a legislative body.
- Delimitation is undertaken by a highly powerful commission. They are formally known as Delimitation Commission or Boundary Commission.
- These bodies are so powerful that its orders have the force of law and they cannot be challenged before any court.
- Such commissions have been constituted at least four times in India — in 1952 under the Delimitation Commission Act, 1952; in 1963 under Delimitation Commission Act, 1962; in 1973 under Delimitation Act, 1972 and last in 2002 under Delimitation Act, 2002.

- The commissions' orders are enforced as per the date specified by the President of India. Copies of these orders are laid before the Lok Sabha or the concerned Legislative Assembly. No modifications are permitted.
- **Composition of the Commission:** According to the Delimitation Commission Act, 2002, the Delimitation Commission appointed by the Centre has to have three members: a serving or retired judge of the Supreme Court as the chairperson, and the Chief Election Commissioner or Election Commissioner nominated by the CEC and the State Election Commissioner as ex-officio members.

SUSPENSION OF MPs

- The Speaker is empowered to force a Member to withdraw from the House (for the remaining part of the day), or to place him/her under suspension.
- Rule Number 373 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business says: "The Speaker, if is of the opinion that the conduct of any Member is grossly disorderly, may direct such Member to withdraw immediately from the House, and any Member so ordered to withdraw shall do so forthwith and shall remain absent during the remainder of the day's sitting."
- To deal with more recalcitrant Members, the Speaker may take recourse to Rules 374 and 374A. Rule 374 says: "(1) The Speaker may, if deems it necessary, name a Member who disregards the authority of the Chair or abuses the rules of the House by persistently and wilfully obstructing the business thereof.
- "(2) If a Member is so named by the Speaker, the Speaker shall, on a motion being made forthwith put the question that the Member (naming such Member) be suspended from the service of the House for a period not exceeding the remainder of the session: Provided that the House may, at any time, on a motion being made, resolve that such suspension be terminated.
- "(3) A member suspended under this rule shall forthwith withdraw from the precincts of the House."
- While the Speaker is empowered to place a Member under suspension, the authority for revocation of this order is not vested in her. It is for the House, if it so desires, to resolve on a motion to revoke the suspension.
- Like the **Speaker in Lok Sabha**, the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha is empowered under Rule Number 255 of its Rule Book to "direct any Member whose conduct is in his opinion grossly disorderly to withdraw immediately" from the House.
- "Any Member so ordered to withdraw shall do so forthwith and shall absent himself during the remainder of the day's meeting."
- The **Chairman** may "name a Member who disregards the authority of the Chair or abuses the rules of the Council by persistently and wilfully obstructing" business.
- In such a situation, the House may adopt a motion suspending the Member from the service of the House for a period not exceeding the remainder of the session.
- The House may, however, by another motion, terminate the suspension.
- Unlike the Speaker, however, the Rajya Sabha Chairman does not have the power to suspend a Member

INDIAN OCEAN COMMISSION

- India was recently accepted as an observer in the Indian Ocean Commission.
- India's entry is a consequence of its deepening strategic partnership with France as well as its expanding ties with the Vanilla Islands.
- Significance of this status for India: India will get an official foothold in a premier regional institution in the western Indian Ocean, boosting engagement with islands in this part of the Indian Ocean.
- These island nations are increasingly important for India's strategic outreach as part of its Indo-Pacific policy. This move would enhance ties with France which is the strong global power in the western Indian Ocean.
- It lends depth to India's **SAGAR** (security and growth for all in the region) policy unveiled by PM Modi in 2015.
- The move would lead to greater security cooperation with countries in East Africa.
- The move also strengthens western flank of the Indo-Pacific and is a stepping stone to security cooperation with East Africa.
- It is an intergovernmental organization created in 1982. It was institutionalized in 1984 by the Victoria Agreement in Seychelles.
- The COI is composed of five African Indian Ocean nations: **Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion** (an overseas region of France), and Seychelles.
- COI's principal mission is to strengthen the ties of friendship between the countries and to be a platform of solidarity for the entire population of the African Indian Ocean region.
- The Commission has a Secretariat which is located in Mauritius and headed by a Secretary General.

NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR

To acknowledge Women's achievements, the Government of India confers **Nari Shakti Puraskars** on eminent women and institutions in recognition of their service towards the cause of women empowerment. Initiated in the year 1999.

- The awards are given away by the President of India every year on 8 March, International Women's Day. The Ministry of Women and Child Development announces these national level awards for eminent women, organisations and institutions.
- Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar Award for Best Private Sector organization/ Public sector undertaking
- Kannagi Devi Award for Best State which has appreciably improved Child Sex Ratio (CSR)
- Mata Jijabai Award for Best Urban Local body
- Rani Gaidinliu Zeliang Award for Best Civil Society organization (CSO)
- Rani Lakshmi Bai Award for Best Institution for Research & Development
- Rani Rudramma Devi Awards for two District Panchayats and two Gram Panchayats
- The **awardees are:** 103 year old athlete Mann Kaur, Indian Air Force's first women fighter pilots Mohana Singh, Bhawana Kanth and Avani Chaturvedi, Farmers Padala Bhudevi and Bina Devi,

Environmentalism Chami Murmu, classical vocalist Kaushiki Chakroborty and 98 year old Karthyayini Amma who topped the literacy exam in 2018

SAHYADRI MEGHA

- It is a new variety of paddy resistant to blast disease and rich in nutrients. It was developed by the University of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences (UAHS), Shivamogga, as part of its initiative to prevent decline in the area under paddy cultivation.
- Sahyadri Megha was developed under the hybridization breeding method by cross-breeding the best among the 'Jyothi' variety with that of 'Akkalu', a disease-resistant and protein-rich paddy variety.
- The new variety will be notified under the Indian Seed Act 1966 shortly after which it will become part of the seed chain.

Blast Disease:

- It is caused by fungus *Pyricularia grisea* (*P. oryzae*).
- Also known as rotten neck or rice fever.
- It was first recorded in India during 1918.
- It may result in grain loss of up to 70 to 80%.

MAJOR PORT AUTHORITIES BILL, 2020

Major Port Authorities Bill 2020 Introduced in The Lok Sabha. Bill will replace the Major Port Trusts Act, 1963.

The salient features of the Major Port Authorities Bill 2020 are:

- Compared to the Major Port Trusts Act, 1963 the bill reduces the number of sections to 76 from 134 by eliminating overlapping and obsolete Sections.
- Simplified composition of the Board of Port Authority which will comprise of 11 to 13 Members from the present 17 to 19 Members representing various interests.
- Provision has been made for inclusion of representative of State Government in which the Major Port is situated, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Defence and Customs, Department of Revenue as Members in the Board apart from a Government Nominee Member and a Member representing the employees of the Major Port Authority.
- Tariff Authority for Major Ports (TAMP) has now been given powers to fix tariff which will act as a reference tariff for purposes of bidding for PPP projects.
- PPP operators will be free to fix tariff based on market conditions.
- An Adjudicatory Board has been proposed to be created to carry out the residual function of the erstwhile TAMP for Major Ports, to look into disputes between ports and PPP concessionaires, to review stressed PPP projects and suggest measures to review stressed PPP projects.
- The Boards of Port Authority have been delegated full powers to enter into contracts, planning and development, fixing of tariff except in national interest, security and emergency arising out of inaction and default.

- The Board of each Major Port shall be entitled to create specific master plan in respect of any development or infrastructure established or proposed to be established within the port limits and the land appurtenant thereto and such master plan shall be independent of any local or State Government regulations of any authority whatsoever.
- In the landlord port model, the publicly governed port authority acts as a regulatory body and as landlord while private companies carry out port operations—mainly cargohandling activities.
- Here, the port authority maintains ownership of the port while the infrastructure is leased to private firms that provide and maintain their own superstructure and install own equipment to handle cargo.
- In return, the landlord port gets a share of the revenue from the private entity.

PRADHAN MANTRI KRISHI SINCHAYEE YOJANA

- Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) has various components Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP), PMKSY –Har Khet Ko Pani (HKKP) including Command Area Development and Water Management (CADWM), Surface-Minor Irrigation (SMI) and Repair, Renovation and Restoration (RRR) of Water Bodies, PMKSY-Per Drop More Crop (PDMC) and PMKSY- Watershed Development Component (WDC).
- Water being a State subject, initiatives on sustainable water management including conservation and water harvesting in the Country is primarily States' responsibility.
- Schemes by various States in the field of water conservation/harvesting: 'Mukhyamantri Jal Swavlamban Abhiyan' in Rajasthan, 'Jalyukt Shibir' in Maharashtra, 'Sujalam Sufalam Abhiyan' in Gujarat, 'Mission Kakatiya' in Telangana, Neeru Chettu' in Andhra Pradesh, Jal Jeevan Hariyali in Bihar, 'Jal Hi Jeevan' in Haryana among others.

FLOOR TEST OR TRUST VOTE

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Kamal Nath has requested Governor Lalji Tandon to hold a floor test in the Assembly session starting from March 16, on a date fixed by the Speaker.

- Floor test is a constitutional mechanism. It is used to determine if the incumbent government enjoys the support of the legislature.
- Voting process happen in the state's Legislative Assembly or the Lok Sabha at the central level.
- Technically, the chief minister of a state is appointed by the Governor. The appointed chief minister usually belongs to the single largest party or the coalition which has the 'magic number'.
- The magic number is the total number of seats required to form a government, or stay in power. It is the half-way mark, plus one. In case of a tie, the Speaker casts the deciding vote.
- However, at times, a government's majority can be questioned. The leader of the party claiming majority has to move a vote of confidence.

- If some MLAs remain absent or abstain from voting, the majority is counted on the basis of those present and voting. This effectively reduces the strength of the House and in turn brings down the majority-mark.
- Voting process can happen orally, with electronic gadgets or a ballot process.
- Governor can also ask the Chief Minister to prove his or her majority in the House if the stability of the government comes into question.
- While there is another test, Composite floor test, which is necessitated when more than one person stake the claim to form the government and the majority is not clear.
- Governor may call a special session to assess who has the majority. The majority is counted based on those present and voting and this can be done through voice vote also.

STATE DISASTER RESPONSE FUND (SDRF)

Ministry of Home Affairs decided to treat **COVID-19** as a notified disaster for the purpose of providing assistance under the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF).

- According to the Disaster Management Act, a disaster is defined as the following, “a catastrophe, mishap, calamity or grave occurrence in any area, arising from natural or man-made causes, or by accident or negligence which results in substantial loss of life or human suffering or damage to, and destruction of, property, or damage to, or degradation of, environment, and is of such a nature or magnitude as to be beyond the coping capacity of the community of the affected area”.
- Ministry of Home Affairs has defined a disaster as an “extreme disruption of the functioning of a society that causes widespread human, material, or environmental losses that exceed the ability of the affected society to cope with its own resources.”
- 31 disaster categories are organised into five major sub-groups, which are: water and climate related disasters, geological related disasters, chemical, industrial and nuclear related disasters and biological related disasters, which includes biological disasters and epidemics.
- Constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005 by respective states and it is the primary fund available with state governments for responses to notified disasters.
- Central government contributes 75 per cent towards the SDRF allocation for general category states and UTs, and over 90 per cent for special category states/UTs, which includes north-eastern states, Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand).
- For SDRF, the Centre releases funds in two equal instalments as per the recommendation of the Finance Commission.
- Support from the National Disaster Response Fund: it supplements the SDRF of a state, in case of a disaster of severe nature, provided adequate funds are not available in the SDRF.
- The disasters covered under the SDRF include cyclones, droughts, tsunamis, hailstorms, landslides, avalanches and pest attacks among others.
- State executive committee headed by the Chief Secretary is authorized to decide on all matters relating to the financing of the relief expenditure from the SDRF.
- Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) audit the SDRF every year.

1075 Toll-free Number

- The Health Ministry has issued a **Toll-Free** number 1075 for the public for inquiry about coronavirus.
- Other important measures include encouraging private sector organizations or employers to allow employees to work from home wherever feasible. Meetings, as far as feasible, shall be done through video conferences.
- Restaurants must ensure hand washing protocol and proper cleanliness of frequently touched surfaces. They must ensure physical distancing a minimum of 1 meter between tables and encourage open-air seating with adequate distancing.

SAGARMALA PROGRAMME

The **Sagarmala programme** is the flagship programme of the Ministry of Shipping.

- Its objective is to promote port-led development in the country through harnessing India's 7,500 km long coastline, 14,500 km of potentially navigable waterways and strategic location on key international maritime trade routes.
- The main vision of the Sagarmala Programme is to reduce logistics cost for EXIM and domestic trade with minimal infrastructure investment.
- It was approved by the Union Cabinet in 2015 and a National Perspective Plan was prepared by the Ministry of Shipping which was released in 2016.
- Out of these, 143 projects have been completed, and 190 projects are already under implementation. Remaining set of 167 projects are under various stages of development and expected completion are well within 2035.
- Implementation of these projects are being done by the Central Line Ministries, State Governments / Maritime Boards and SPVs preferably through the private sector and through the Public Private Participation (PPP) wherever feasible.

UTTAR PRADESH RECOVERY OF DAMAGE TO PUBLIC AND PRIVATE PROPERTY ORDINANCE, 2020

- The Uttar Pradesh government notified the Uttar Pradesh Recovery of Damage to Public and Private Property Ordinance, 2020. It is a stringent new law to recover compensation from those who damage public and private property during protests and riots.
- The owner of any private property or the head of the office concerned in respect of public property may file claims for compensation within three months of any incident that causes any damage during public protests, bandhs or riots.
- Claims for compensation will be decided by designated Claims Tribunals that will be authorised to investigate complaints and assess the damage.
- The claims would cover not only damage to public and private property but also the costs borne by the police and the administration in taking preventive measures.
- The liability would be fixed on the alleged perpetrators as well as those accused of instigating or exhorting them.

- Every order or award passed by the Claims Tribunal would be “final” and no appeal would be “maintainable” before any court.
- Also, no civil court will have the jurisdiction to entertain any question regarding the claims.
- The chairperson of the Claims Tribunal would be a retired district judge, while its members would be of the rank of additional commissioner

CHAITRA JATRA FESTIVAL

- The famous annual Chaitra Jatra festival scheduled to be held on March 17 at Odisha’s Tara Tarini hill shrine was cancelled as a precautionary measure against COVID-19 infection.
- This festival is celebrated at Tara Tarini hill shrine on Tuesdays of the Hindu month of Chaitra. The largest gatherings occur on second and third Tuesdays.
- Tara Tarini hill shrine, located at Kumari hill on banks of the Rushikulya river, is a major centre of Shakti worship in Odisha.

CATEGORISATION OF INDUSTRIES

Industries are categorised based on their pollution load by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC).

- Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has developed the criteria of categorization of industrial sectors based on the Pollution Index which is a function of the emissions (air pollutants), effluents (water pollutants), hazardous wastes generated and consumption of resources.
- Red category: Includes Cement industry, Petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, sugar, paper and pulp, nuclear power plants, organic chemicals, fertilizers, fire crackers.
- Orange category: Includes coal washeries, glass manufacturing, paints, stone crushers, and aluminium and copper extraction from scrap.
- Green category: Includes aluminium utensils, steel furniture, soap manufacturing and tea processing.
- White category: Includes the industries that are “practically non-polluting”. These industries, like air cooler or air conditioning units, chalk factories, biscuit tray units, won’t need a green clearance enabling easier financing.
- Industries scoring 60 and above on a scale of 1 to 100 have been rated red. An index between 41 and 59 earns an orange category, while a score between 21 and 40 gets a green. Pollution index lower than 20 have been rated white

STATE ELECTION COMMISSION

- Constitution of India vests in the State Election Commission, consisting of a State Election Commissioner, the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of electoral rolls

for, and the conduct of all elections to the Panchayats and the Municipalities (Articles 243K, 243ZA).

- State Election Commissioner is appointed by the Governor.
- Provisions of Article 243K of the Constitution, which provides for setting up of SECs, are almost identical to those of Article 324 related to the EC. In other words, the SECs enjoy the same status as the EC.
- In 2006, the Supreme Court emphasised the two constitutional authorities enjoy the same powers.
- In *Kishan Singh Tomar vs Municipal Corporation of the City of Ahmedabad*, the Supreme Court directed that state governments should abide by orders of the SECs during the conduct of the panchayat and municipal elections, just like they follow the instructions of the EC during Assembly and Parliament polls.
- Although state election commissioners are appointed by the state governors and can only be removed by impeachment.

APPROPRIATION BILL

- A money bill that allows the government to withdraw funds from the Consolidated Fund of India to meet its expenses during the course of a financial year.
- As per **article 114** of the Constitution, the government can withdraw money from the Consolidated Fund only after receiving approval from Parliament.
- To put it simply, the Finance Bill contains provisions on financing the expenditure of the government, and Appropriation Bill specifies the quantum and purpose for withdrawing money

ARTICLE 142

- In an extraordinary display of its constitutional powers under Article 142 of the Indian Constitution, the Supreme Court has stripped Manipur Cabinet Minister T. Shyamkumar, who is facing disqualification proceedings for defection, of his office and banned him from entering the Assembly with immediate effect.
- Apex court took this decision after Speaker Y. Khemchand Singh, even after the one month's period given by the apex court, failed to decide on the disqualification petition pending against Shyam kumar.
- **Article 142** "provide(s) a unique power to the Supreme Court, to do "complete justice" between the parties, i.e., where at times law or statute may not provide a remedy, the Court can extend itself to put a quietus to a dispute in a manner which would befit the facts of the case.
- **Article 142(1)** states that "The Supreme Court in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it, and any decree so passed or order so made shall be enforceable throughout the territory of India in such manner as may be prescribed by or under any law made by Parliament and, until provision in that behalf is so made, in such manner as the President may by order prescribe".

HERD IMMUNITY

- UK has retracted under criticism after suggesting it would allow COVID-19 to pass through the population, so that 'herd community' could be achieved.
- Herd immunity refers to preventing an infectious disease from spreading by immunising a certain percentage of the population.
- While the concept is most commonly used in the context of vaccination, herd community can also be achieved after enough people have become immune after being infected
- if a certain percentage of the population is immune, members of that group can no longer infect another person.
- This breaks the chain of infection through the community ("herd"), and prevents it from reaching those who are the most vulnerable
- "**Herd immunity threshold**" is the number of immune individuals above which a disease may no longer circulate

SECTION 188 IPC

- The Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 lays down punishment as per Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, for flouting orders issued by various state governments to contain the spread of COVID-19.
- In the past, the Act has been routinely enforced across the country for dealing with outbreaks of diseases such as swine flu, dengue, and cholera.
- Its penal provisions are currently being invoked by states to contain the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Its against Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant.
- Says violators can be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one month or with fine which may extend to two hundred rupees, or with both
- and if such disobedience causes or tends to cause danger to human life, health or safety, or causes or tends to cause a riot or affray, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both.

YAKSHAGANA

- More than 900 Yakshagana scripts, including the ones printed in 1905 and 1907, have now been digitised and made available online for free.
- It is a traditional theatre form of Karnataka.
- A temple art form that depicts mythological stories and Puranas.
- Performed with massive headgears, elaborate facial make-up and vibrant costumes and ornaments.

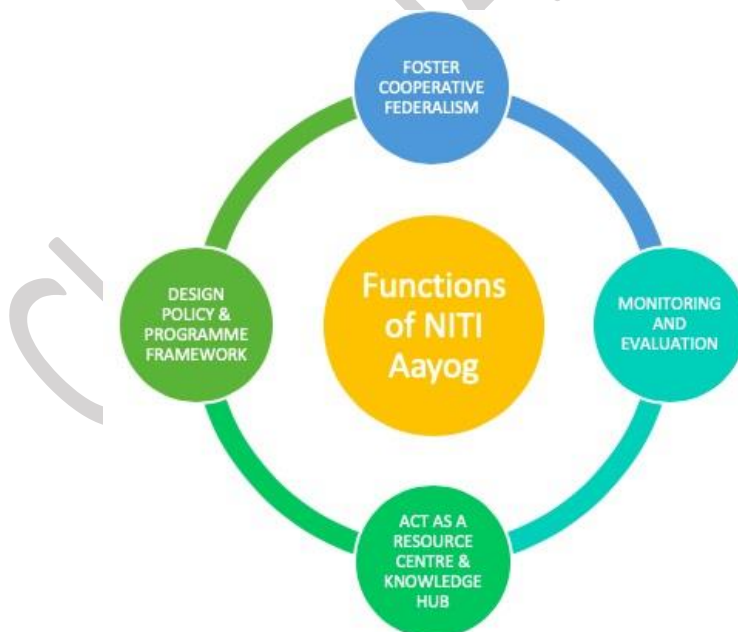
- Usually recited in **Kannada**, it is also performed in **Malayalam** as well as Tulu (the dialect of south **Karnataka**).
- It is performed with percussion instruments like chenda, maddalam, jagatta or chengila (cymbals) and chakratala or elathalam (small cymbals).

V K PAUL COMMITTEE

- The government has constituted a high level technical committee of Public Health Experts for COVID-19 to guide the prevention and control activities in the country.
- 21 member committee will be headed by NITI Aayog member Dr V K Paul.

NITI Aayog

1. The NITI Aayog is a policy think tank of the Government of India. It was established with the aim to achieve sustainable development goals with cooperative federalism by fostering the involvement of State Governments of India in the economic policy-making process using a bottom-up approach.
2. The Union government constituted the NITI Aayog to replace the Planning Commission instituted in 1950.
3. With the **Prime Minister as its Chairman**, comprises Chief Ministers of all States and Lt. Governors of Union Territories (UTs). On 7 June 2018, the **Prime Minister** approved the reconstitution of NITI Aayog to include Ex-officio members and special invitees.



NITI Aayog:

- NITI Aayog is not a statutory body.
- It was formed via a resolution of the Union Cabinet on January 1, 2015.
- NITI Aayog with Institute for Competitiveness as the knowledge partner has released the **India Innovation Index (III) 2019**.
- Karnataka is the most innovative major state in India.
- The top ten major states are majorly concentrated in southern and western India.

SUNRISE Mission of NASA

1. On March 30, 2020, NASA announced Sun Radio Interferometer Space Experiment (SUNRISE) mission. The mission is to study about how sun creates Giant Solar Particle Storms and aid future astronauts travelling to Mars and protect them from solar storms.
2. The mission is to deploy six CubeSats in Geosynchronous-orbit. The mission has come true because of the success of DARPA High-Frequency Research and Mars Cube One (MARCO).
3. The Cubesats will use radio telescope to capture radio images of low-frequency emission that are emitted from the sun. These will be sent to the earth through Deep Space Network. Also, the Cubesats will create a 3D mapping to learn about location of giant particle that are originated from the sun.
4. The mission is to study sun's spectrum. This is important as sun's spectrum cannot be studied from the earth due to the ionosphere.

Four Nuclear Restrictions Renewed by US

- On March 30, 2020, the US renewed four nuclear restrictions imposed on Iran. The restrictions were imposed to prevent Iran from building its nuclear programme. The restrictions have been renewed for another 60 days. The decision makes it harder for Iran to work on its Nuclear programme
- US and Iran signed Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action that aimed at curbing nuclear programme of Iran in 2015. Under the deal, most of Iran's Uranium were shipped out of the country. Several operational nuclear operations of Iran were brought under international inspection. Also, a heavy water facility was made inoperable.
- Sanctions and hinderances to trade in Iran will affect India's oil imports greatly. When US pressurized in similar way to cut oil imports from Venezuela. This had then affected India's oil trade greatly.
- These restrictions affect India's interest as well. India has big plans to reach Central Asia through Chabahar port, which India is developing in Iran.
- Germany, France and the UK had set up a payment channel with Iran called **INSTEX**, to help continue trade and circumvent US sanctions. Washington has cautioned EU nations against such actions.

Seal Pups Face Tough Winter Due to Reduced Ice Levels

- The Seals need ice to keep themselves safe from predators such as wolves and foxes. However, the declining ice in the Baltic sea has disrupted their survivals. With depleting ice levels, the seals are forced to inhabit the islets (small islands) that they normally hesitate to inhabit. This

has caused overcrowding and is disrupting the survival rates of their pups. Around 3,000 Seal pups are born on the Baltic Sea Coasts every year.

- The Grey Seals are the most common seals in these seas and have been categorized as “Least Concern” under IUCN Red List.
- Baltic Sea is a Mediterranean Sea. It is enclosed by Estonia, Denmark, Finland, Lithuania, Sweden, Poland, Germany, Russia. The group of countries that are currently referred to as Baltic states are Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.
- The Helsinki Convention was signed in 1992 is on the protection of the marine environment of Baltic Sea. It was signed by Russia, Estonia, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, Poland, USSR, Germany, Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania, Denmark and Finland.



India: Nation-wide Lock Down; Science behind 21-day Lock Down

- On March 30, 2020 PM Narendra Modi declared a three-week nationwide lockdown starting midnight explaining that it was the only way of breaking the **Covid-19** infection cycle.

- There are rich scientific data behind the 21-days of lock down. The 21-day quarantine has already been verified in Ebola cases. The value, '21' was derived from outbreak data from the past and present public health experiences.
- Experts have confirmed that incubation period of 14 days have been arrived for the virus. It will take another week for the residual infection to die out.
- The Incubation period is the time between exposure of chemical or radiation to a pathogenic organism and the time it shows signs of disappearance. According to "Science Daily", the incubation period of COVID-19 is just five days. It also says that it will develop symptoms within 11.5 days of infection.

Social Distancing:

- Social distancing is a non-pharmaceutical infection prevention and control intervention implemented to avoid/decrease contact between those who are infected with a disease causing pathogen and those who are not, so as to stop or slow down the rate and extent of disease transmission in a community. This eventually leads to decrease in spread, morbidity and mortality due to the disease.

What is Home Quarantine?

- Quarantine is a Latin word. It means 40 days. During old times, ships that were suspected to have germs or disease causing pathogens spread all over were put in the sea away from the port for 40 days.
- This was first brought up in Britain. Britain adopted the method especially when there was plague spread all over.

Earth Hour

- The World Wildlife Fund (WWF)'s Earth Hour, observed annually on the last Saturday of March, celebrated virtually with all public events being cancelled due to coronavirus pandemic.
- Earth Hour is a symbolic movement of "Lights OFF" to save environment. This event was first started in Sydney, Australia in 2007. The main aim of the marking Earth Hour is to call attention towards global warming, loss of biodiversity and climate change.
- During the one-hour campaign, businesses and people all over the world switch off unnecessary lights and electronic items between 8:30 PM and 9:30 PM.
- The World Wide Fund for Nature is an international non-governmental organization founded in 1961. It is headquartered at Gland (Switzerland). It is the world's largest conservation organization.

Objectives:

- Conserving the world's biological diversity
- Ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- Promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption

Reports and Programmes:

- **Living Planet Report** - published every two years by WWF since 1998; it is based on a Living Planet Index and ecological footprint calculation
- **Earth hour**
- **Debt-for-nature swaps** - financial transactions in which a portion of a developing nation's foreign debt is forgiven in exchange for local investments in environmental conservation measures.
- **Marine Stewardship Council(MSC)** - independent non-profit organization which sets a standard for sustainable fishing
- **Healthy Grown Potato** - eco-brand that provides high-quality, sustainably grown, packaged, and shipped potatoes to consumers by leveraging integrated pest management(IPM) farming practices on large scale farms

Operation Namaste to combat COVID-19

- Recently, the Indian Army launched "Operation Namaste" to contain the spread of Corona Virus in the country. Under the operation, the army will help the Government of India fight against the deadly disease.
- Under the operation, Indian Army has established quarantine facilities. Also, Command wise help line numbers have been established.
- Facilities for the families of the army men have been arranged to visit nearest camps in case of emergency while they are away serving the country.
- Army has also issued guidelines for army men to keep themselves safe as it is difficult to maintain social distancing due to operational and tactical
- The Indian Army has also prepared a Contingency plan at a six-hour notice. The plan has been prepared after analyzing the spread and containment of the virus in other countries.

HydroxyChloroquine:

- On March 27, 2020, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare declared the Hydroxychloroquine as a Schedule **H1 drug**.
- **Hydroxychloroquine** is very similar to **chloroquine**, one of the oldest and best-known anti-malarial drugs, but with lesser side-effects.
- Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by Plasmodium parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected **female Anopheles mosquitoes**.
- It is preventable and curable.
- There are 5 parasite species that cause malaria in humans, and 2 of these species – P. falciparum and P. vivax – pose the greatest threat.

In focus

- An anti-malarial drug, hydroxychloroquine is an interferon blocker, and works by diminishing the immune system's response to a viral infection. A hyperactive response by the immune system is said to be primarily responsible for pneumonia, also a fallout of a severe COVID-19 infection
- These dosages are also linked to instances of cardiac arrhythmia and liver damage. Wide usage may actually handicap people's ability to fight the infection
- Indian drug manufacturers say they have sufficient stockpiles and enough to export. But there are reports of stock running out and rheumatoid arthritis patients finding them unavailable in stores
- A study in France showed that hydroxychloroquine alone or in combination with azithromycin appeared to reduce virus levels quicker prompting drug regulators in several countries including in India to approve the drug in restricted settings
- However, several scientists fault the design of these trials



What is Schedule H1?

The drugs listed under Schedule H1 are required to be sold under following conditions:

1. The supply if H1 drugs are to be registered in a separate register. The register should hold the name and address of the prescriber and the patient. It should also hold quantity supplied. And these details are to be held by the supplier for a minimum of three year.
2. The drug listed under Schedule H1 should be labelled as "Rx" in red colour. The label should also carry precautionary warnings.

G20 Video Summit on Corona Virus

- Saudi Arabia, which currently holds the G20 presidency, called for the "virtual summit" following criticism that the powerful group of major economies had been slow to address the global crisis.

What Is the G20?

- The Group of 20 is an organization of finance ministers and central bank governors from 19 individual countries and the European Union.
- India is a member of G20. The other members include Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, France, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, the Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the UK and the US.

What Does the G7 Stand For?

- G7 stands for "Group of Seven" industrialized nations.
- G7 used to be known as the **G8 (Group of Eight) until 2014** when Russia was excluded because of its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine.
- The G7 was created more than four decades ago as an annual gathering of political leaders to discuss and exchange ideas on a broad range of issues such as including global economy, security and energy.

Most Probable Questions for IAS Prelims 2020

CLASSIC IAS ACADEMY QUIZ

Q.1) India's ranking in the 'Global Health Security Index' is sometimes seen in the news. Which of the following has prepared that ranking?

- a) World Health Organization
- b) Doctors Without Borders
- c) Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- d) None of the above

Q.2) With reference to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, consider the following statements:

1. It is an environmental treaty of the United Nations.
2. The migratory species that need or would significantly benefit from international co-operation are listed in Appendix I of the Convention.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2

d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.3) The National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA) has been constituted under

- a) The Consumer Protection Act, 2019
- b) The Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017
- c) The Right to Information Act, 2005
- d) The Competition Act, 2002

Q.4) The term "MAC Binding", sometimes seen in the news is related to

- a) Pharmaceutical combination therapy.
- b) Reconstruction scheme to protect bad banks.
- c) Tracing a device based on its online activity.
- d) Adaption of multiple immune defense functions that can eliminate the virus.

Q.5) With reference to the phenomenon of "red snow", consider the following statements:

1. It is caused due to a red-pigmented, microscopic algae which thrives in freezing water as the ice melt.
2. Recently, it was observed in Kashmir Valley.

Which of the statements given above is/are **incorrect**?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2s
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q.6) The Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana campaign has been launched under the aegis of

- a) The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- b) The Ministry of Science and Technology.
- c) The Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers.
- d) The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Q.7) Consider the following countries:

- 1. Mauritius
- 2. India
- 3. Sri Lanka
- 4. Madagascar
- 5. Pakistan

Which of the above countries are members of the Indian Ocean Commission?

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 2, 3 and 5 only
- c) 1 and 4 only
- d) 2, 3 and 4 only

Q.8) Which one of the following countries does not open out to the Baltic Sea?

- a) Russia
- b) Denmark
- c) Finland
- d) Netherlands

Q.9) The report entitled 'A future for the world's children', sometimes mentioned in the news has been prepared by the

- a) UNICEF and World Bank
- b) WHO-UNICEF-Lancet Commission
- c) Child Rights International Network
- d) United Nations Children's Fund

Q.10) Which of the following protected areas is/are located in Assam?

- 1. Pakke Tiger Reserve
- 2. Nameri Tiger Reserve
- 3. Buxa Tiger Reserve

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a) 2 only
- b) 1 and 3 only
- c) 2 and 3 only
- d) 1 and 2 only

Answers & Explanation

Q.1)

Ans) D

Exp)

- The Global Health Security Index presents the results of an assessment of global health security capabilities in 195 countries prepared by the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, the Nuclear Threat Initiative (NTI) and the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). It was first published in 2019.
- This index assesses countries' health security and capabilities across six categories, 34 indicators, and 85 sub-indicators. The findings are drawn from open-source information that answered 140 questions across the categories.
- The full report offers 33 recommendations to address the gaps identified by the index.

Q.2)

Ans) A

Exp)

- **Statement 1 is correct.** The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals is an environmental treaty of the United Nations. It provides a global platform for the conservation and sustainable use of migratory animals and their habitats. CMS brings together the States through which migratory animals pass, the Range States, and lays the legal foundation for internationally coordinated conservation measures throughout a migratory range.
- CMS is also known as the Bonn Convention. It is the only convention that deals with taking or harvesting of species from the wild. It currently protects 173 migratory species from across the globe. The Convention came into force on November 1, 1983.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect.** The migratory species threatened with extinction are listed on Appendix I of the Convention. CMS Parties strive towards strictly protecting these animals, conserving or restoring the places where they live, mitigating obstacles to migration and controlling other factors that might endanger them. Migratory species that need or would significantly benefit from international co-operation are listed in Appendix II of the Convention. For this reason, the Convention encourages the Range States to conclude global or regional agreements.

Q.3)

Ans) B

Exp)

- The National Anti-Profiteering Authority (NAA) has been constituted under Section 171 of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017 to ensure that the reduction in rate of tax or the benefit of input tax credit is passed on to the recipient by way of commensurate reduction in prices.
- Further, the **following steps** have been taken by the NAA to ensure that customers get the full benefit of tax cuts:
 1. Holding regular meetings with the Zonal Screening Committees and the Chief Commissioners of Central Tax to stress upon consumer awareness programmes;
 2. Launching a helpline to resolve the queries of citizens regarding registration of complaints against profiteering.
 3. Receiving complaints through email and NAA portal.
 4. Working with consumer welfare organizations in order to facilitate outreach activities.

Q.4)

Ans) C

Exp)

- Recently, internet connectivity was made available in Jammu and Kashmir among various conditions including "with mac-binding". Every device has a **Media Access Control (MAC)** address, a hardware identification number that is unique to it.
- While accessing the Internet, every device is assigned an Internet Protocol (IP) address. This forces a particular device to access the internet from a specific IP address.
- If either the MAC (Media Access Control) address or the IP address changes, the device will not be able to access the internet. MAC-binding will also enable authorities to trace a device on the basis of its online activity.

Q.5)

Ans) B

Exp)

- **Statement 1 is correct.** The "red snow" or "watermelon" phenomenon has been known since ancient times but now it raises concerns about climate change. The snow is red because of a red-pigmented, microscopic algae called *Chlamydomonas nivalis* chlamydomonas, which thrives in freezing water as the ice melts.
- **Statement 2 is incorrect.** Recently, the phenomenon of "red snow" or "watermelon" has been observed over the last few weeks around Ukraine's Vernadsky Research Base, off the coast of Antarctica's northernmost peninsula.

Q.6)

Ans) C

Exp)

- The '**Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana** (PMBJP)' is a campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals (under the Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers) to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses.
- PMBJP stores have been set up to provide generic drugs, which are available at lesser prices but are equivalent in quality and efficacy as expensive branded drugs. It was launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals in November 2008 under the name Jan Aushadi Campaign. Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI) is the implementation agency for PMBJP.
- In India, various branded (Generic) medicines are sold at significantly higher prices than their unbranded generic equivalents, though are identical in the therapeutic value. Given the widespread poverty across the country, making available reasonably priced quality generic medicines in the market would benefit everyone.

Q.7)

Ans) C

Exp)

- The Indian Ocean Commission was created in 1982 at Port Louis, Mauritius. It was institutionalized in 1984 by the Victoria Agreement in Seychelles. It is composed of five African Indian Ocean nations: **Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius, Réunion (an overseas region of France), and Seychelles**. The Commission has a Secretariat which is located in Mauritius and headed by a Secretary-General.
- India was recently accepted as an **observer in the Indian Ocean Commission**, getting a seat at the table of the organization that handles maritime governance in the western Indian Ocean.

Q.8)

Ans) D

Exp)

- The Baltic Sea is positioned in Northern Europe and bordered by Sweden (a part of the Scandinavian Peninsula), Finland, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, northeastern Germany, and eastern Denmark and its numerous islands.
- **Netherlands** does not open out to the Baltic Sea.

Q.9)

Ans) B

Exp)

- The report entitled 'A future for the world's children' was published by an independent WHO-UNICEF-Lancet Commission.
- The report finds that the health and future of every child and adolescent worldwide is under immediate threat from ecological degradation, climate change and exploitative marketing practices that push heavily processed fast food, sugary drinks, alcohol and tobacco at them.
- It shows that children in Norway, the Republic of Korea and the Netherlands have the best chance at survival and well-being, while children in the Central African Republic, Chad, Somalia, Niger and Mali face the worst odds.

Q.10)

Ans) A

Exp)

- The Pakke Tiger Reserve lies in the foothills of the eastern Himalaya in the East Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh. It is also known as Pakhui Tiger Reserve. **Hence, option 1 is incorrect.**
- The Nameri National Park is a national park in the foothills of the eastern Himalayas in the Sonitpur District of Assam. **Hence, option 2 is correct.** The Nameri National Park is famous for Tiger, Elephant, rare species of birds and rare species of fish in Jia Bharali river. The most famous **white winged wood-duck (Deo Hanh)** is found here.
- The Buxa Tiger Reserve is a tiger reserve in northern West Bengal. **Hence, option 3 is correct.**

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