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1. SOCIAL ISSUES

1.1. World Braille Day

- January 4 is celebrated as a World Braille Day to commemorate Louis Braille. Louis was the creator of Braille script which is a means of communication for people who are blind.

- Around 285 million people are estimated to be visually impaired worldwide, with 39 million blind and millions more with low vision.

- Observance of the day helps people to spread the importance of Braille language and also help people to produce works in this language to allow visually impaired people to read the works.

- Braille script is based on the patterns of raised dots on paper that could be felt and one can read anything that is unable to see. It uses 6-dot finger tip reading system which is useful to spread literacy among blind population.

- The World Braille Union (WBU) has worked with the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). Together with other concerned organizations, a treaty was created to remove barriers of intellectual property being transcribed into braille, called The Marrakesh Treaty. The Marrakesh Treaty was adopted by the WIPO in 2013.

<table>
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- There is a shortage of faculty in optometry school as well.

- There are also no regulatory laws to control the practice of optometry even though refractive error is one of the leading causes of blindness.

- However, the Union Health Ministry has already launched a national programme to
control blindness.

- Also, India is the first country to ratify The Marrakesh Treaty.

### 1.2. **Performance on Health Outcomes Index by NITI Aayog**

- A ‘Performance on Health Outcomes’ index, to nudge States towards transformative action in the Health sector, was launched by NITI Aayog.

- The index is meant to capture the annual incremental improvements by States, rather than focus on historical achievements.

- It will rank various states on the basis of their performance on measurable health indicators. The index includes indicator in the domains of the health outcomes governance and information and a few key inputs and processes.

- Monitorable indicators that form a part of Sustainable Development Goal in Health have been included in order to align these initiatives.

#### Benefits

- The health index will assist in State-level monitoring of performance, serve as an input for providing performance-based incentives and improvement in health outcomes.

- The initiative is envisioned to bring about the much required improvements in social sector outcomes, which have not kept pace with the economic growth of the country.

### 1.3. **Swasthya Raksha Programme**

- It has been launched by the AYUSH Ministry to promote health and health education in villages.

- **Objectives** of this programme are:
  
  - To organize Swasthya Rakshan OPDs, Swasthya Parikshan Camps, and Health/Hygiene awareness programme.
  - Awareness about cleanliness of domestic surroundings and environment.
  - Provide medical aid/incidental support in the adopted Colonies/villages.
  - Documentation of demographic information, food habits, hygiene conditions, seasons, lifestyle etc., incidence/prevalence of disease and their relation to the incidence of disease.
Assessment of health status and propagation of Ayurvedic concept of pathya-apathy (Do’s and Don’ts) and extension of health care services.

- **Initiatives Taken So Far**:
  - Developed IEC material (Banners, hoardings, posters, handouts) in Hindi, English and 7 regional languages.
  - Swasthya Rakshan OPDs organized in each village on weekly basis for providing treatment for various disease conditions.
  - Swasthya Parikshan Camps organized on weekly basis.
  - Survey is undertaken in the identified villages to identify prevalent diseases. Individual Health screening of people has been done.
  - For Health Promotion and health education, mass campaigning through rallies, Nukkad Nataks focussing on personal, environmental and social hygiene are being for creating awareness about hygiene.

**AYUSH Ministry**

- The Ministry of AYUSH was formed on 9th November’ 2014.
- Earlier it was known as the Department of Indian System of Medicine and Homeopathy (ISM&H) and renamed as Department of Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) in November 2003.

**Objectives**

1. To upgrade the educational standards of Indian Systems of Medicines and Homoeopathy colleges in the country.

2. To strengthen existing research institutions and to ensure a time-bound research programme on identified diseases for which these systems have an effective treatment.

3. To draw up schemes for promotion, cultivation and regeneration of medicinal plants used in these systems.

4. To evolve Pharmacopoeial standards for Indian Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy drugs.
1.4. Asia Pacific Countries Adopt Urban Plus Approach To Take Planning Beyond City Limits

- Asia Pacific countries that account for over 55% of global urban population have resolved to adopt ‘Urban Plus’ approach taking urban planning and development beyond city limits to prevent unmanageable and unsustainable urban expansion.

- This was contained in the ‘New Delhi Declaration’ adopted on the conclusion of three day deliberations of the Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (APMCHUD).

- The theme of the conference was ‘Emerging Urban Forms-Policy Reforms and Governance Structures in the Context of New Urban Agenda’.

New Delhi Declaration

- Strongly advocated planning for urban and adjoining rural areas in an integrated manner instead of looking at them as independent entities.

- It also called for a thorough review of existing policies and formulation of new policies to promote New Urban Agenda adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development in Quito, Ecuador in October 2016.

- Noting governance as the key to sustainable development, the Declaration stressed on the need for effective governance structures in urban areas.

Implementation Plan

- It recommended land regulation policy mechanisms such as land pooling to ensure inclusive and participatory planning.

- Integration of land use and transportation planning across defined boundaries of cities and mixed land use

- Enforcement and incentivisation of timely execution of infrastructure projects, formulation of comprehensive urban parking policies and community participation in urban planning and service delivery.

- The Implementation Plan has recommended urban resilience as a criteria for investment. Resilience is the ability of cities to withstand and absorb disasters and shocks and maintain normal services and quickly return to normalcy.

- In the Implementation Plan, the member countries have also strongly recommended formulation of National Human Settlement Policies to promote inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable city and human settlements.
Asia Pacific Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development (APMCHUD)

- APMCHUD is an intergovernmental mechanism for collaboration and cooperation in the field of housing and development among Asia Pacific countries.
- Its main objective is to promote Sustainable Development of Human Settlements in Asia Pacific Region.
- It was established under the aegis and support of UN-Habitat.
- APMCHUD is composed of the Biennial Ministerial Conference, the Bureau and the Secretariat and is represented by the Ministers of Housing and Urban Development of the Asia Pacific countries.
- It was the sixth edition of the event which was conducted in New Delhi.
- The 1st APMCHUD was also held in New Delhi, India in 2006.

New Urban Agenda

- The New Urban Agenda is the outcome document agreed upon at the Habitat III cities conference in Quito, Ecuador, in October 2016.
- The New Urban Agenda, coming on the heels of the crystallization of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, seeks to create a mutually reinforcing relationship between urbanization and development.
- It sets the global vision of sustainable urbanization for the next 20 years. It is a set of 175 commitments that countries need to adhere to tackle challenges of urbanization.

URBANISATION IN INDIA

Definition Of Urban Areas

The 1991 Census adopted the following definition for urban areas:

a. All places with a municipality, corporation, cantonment board, notified town area committee or other such places (known as statutory towns).

b. All places which satisfy the following criteria (known as census towns):
   - A minimum population of 5000.
   - At least 75% of male working population engaged in non-agricultural
pursuits, and
  o A density of population of at least 400 persons per sq. km.
c. Besides, the major project colonies, areas of industrial development, railway colonies and important tourist destinations were also treated as urban though they might not fulfil the above criteria strictly.

**Issues With Urbanisation In India**

Although India is one of the less urbanized countries of the world with only 31.8 % of her population living in urban agglomerations/towns, this country is facing a serious crisis of urban growth at the present time. Some of the issues with urbanisation are as below:

1. **Institutional Challenges**
   - Urban Governance – Poor implementation of 74th amendment act led to creation of weak Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).
   - Planning – With Metro Planning Committee non functional in many metros, the current plans have become outdated and do not reflect the concern of urban local dwellers.
   - Finances - Major challenge is of revenue generation with the ULBs. This problem can be analyzed form two perspectives. The states have not given enough autonomy to ULBs to generate revenues and in some case the ULBs have failed to utilize even those tax and fee powers that they have been vested with.
   - Regulator – Absence of effective regulator is leading rise in corrupt practices in Real estate sector.

2. **Infrastructural Challenges**
   - Housing - The growing cost of houses compared to the income of the urban middle class has made it impossible for majority of lower income groups who are compelled to reside in congested accommodation and many of those are devoid of proper ventilation, lighting, water supply, sewage system, etc.
   - Safe Drinking Water - The Zakaria Committee recommended the water requirement per head per day to be 204 litres for cities with population between 5 lakh and 2 million, and 272 litres for cities with population more than 2 million. However, no city in India/ gets sufficient water to meet the needs of city dwellers.
   - Sanitation - The poor sanitation condition is another gloomy feature in urban
areas and particularly in slums and unauthorized colonies of urban areas.

- Urban public transport – Penetration of public transport is low and is not disable friendly.

3. Other Challenges

- Environmental concern
- Urban Crime
- Poverty
- Unemployment

Steps Taken By Government

1. The Constitution (74th Amendment) Act
3. National Urban Renewal Mission (NURM), 2005 - The primary objective of the JnNURM is to create economically productive, efficient, equitable and responsive cities. The JnNURM consists of two sub-missions Urban Infrastructure and Governance (UIG) and Basic Services for Urban Poor (BSUP).
4. Introduction of Metro rail and Mono rail for transportation
5. Smart City concept
6. Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)

Way Forward

- Provide autonomy to 3Fs - Functions, Finance, and Functionaries.
- Synergy in work between different institutional organisations, i.e., avoid duplicacy of work between state and parastatals bodies.
- Proper planning with clear CDP (City Development Plan).
- Community participation in planning and development.
- Use of technology in providing basic amenities to people.

Conclusion

- We cannot think of strong India, economically, socially and culturally, when our cities remain squalor, quality of urban life declines and the urban environment is damaged beyond repair.
• Urbanization has undermined old forms of political mobilization based on caste and religious identities and favors resolution of local issues through right based approach.
• We must focus on addressing the issues associated so as to increase the pace of urbanisation which is sustainable.

Q) With a brief background of quality of urban life in India, introduce the objectives and strategy of the ‘Smart City Programme’. (CSE 2016)

1.5. Panel Recommends Reservation For Girls In IIT

Background

• IITs have abysmally low number of girl students. In 2015, of the 9,974 students allocated undergraduate seats in the first joint allocation process, only 900 were girls (a poor 9 % of the total intake). The number of girls entering IITs has remained below 10 % for many years now.
• This extreme gender disparity is disappointing for any progressive institute that promotes causes of equality and distributive justice.
• Concerned by the slump in number of girl students entering IITs, the Joint Admission Board (JAB) had set up a sub-committee under the chairmanship of Professor Timothy Gonsalves to find ways to rectify the situation in the institutes.
• The panel has recommended reservation for girl students in IITs to address this issue of slump in the number of female students. The committee has suggested creating up to 20% supernumerary seats for girls out of the total number of seats. But only candidates who have already qualified in JEE-Advanced will be considered.
• The reservation for girl students will not affect the number of seats for male candidates. It will help IITs achieve the one lakh target by 2020.

Benefits Of This Step

• Engineering is a preferred higher education choice and adequate presence of women in premier institutes like IITs will only encourage parents to take the career of their girls more seriously, thereby changing the attitude that the society takes to a girl’s education.
• This move will also address the problem of inadequate presence of women in corporate settings as a significant portion of the recruits are from IITs. Thus, the
move will also meaningfully take forward the cause of women empowerment and gender equality at workplace.

- It will go a long way in addressing stereotypes like girls are not good at science and math. More representation in IITs will provide a bigger platform for many brighter minds among girls to prove their technological excellence.

### Conclusion

Two decades ago, the MIT faced a similar problem of fewer women joining the institute. But the gap has considerably reduced now after two decades of sustained efforts. Today, the MIT student population is almost 50% women. Hopefully, the IITs too will embark on a similar route to ensure gender equality on and off their campuses.

1.6. **Child Sex Ratio In Haryana Touches 900 Mark For The First Time Two Decades**

- In 2011, India’s child sex ratio stood at 914 girls to 1000 boys, the lowest since Independence. Haryana had a child sex ratio far worse than the national average- 834 girls to 1000 boys.

- The child sex ratio at birth (SRB) in Haryana for the first time has touched 900-mark in two decades. SRB in December 2016 in Haryana was 914.

### What Led to This Shift

There are several factors that improved these statistics:

1. **Stringent implementation of the laws against illegal sex determination and female foeticide** such as Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic Techniques (PCPNDT) Act, 1994, and the Medical Terminal of Pregnancy (MTP) Act.

2. **Effective lodging of FIRs** - As a result, 391 first information reports were lodged in the State since May 2015.

3. **Deterrence factor** - More than 1,000 offenders have been arrested. Doctors, paramedics and quacks were found involved in the illegal practice.

4. **Collaboration of all departments** at the district-level, coupled with strong political will and coordinated efforts by all districts in the State.

5. **Effective tracking** - A special B3P cell was created by the Chief Minister’s Office to monitor the programme. The CM held a **video-conference** with the Deputy
Commissioners every month to monitor the progress. A social media group was created to share and exchange information.

6. **Mass awareness programmes** - regular meetings, street plays and rallies were held in association with the winning laurels for the country in sports, including Sakshi Malik, Geeta Phogat, Babita and Deepa Malik.

**How Can It Be Further Improved**

In future, the statistics can be improved further with the help of the following:

1. **Give more teeth to the female centric laws** – such as PCPNDT Act banning female foeticide and Dowry Prohibition Act, etc. – and implement them effectively.

2. **Govt. doles** - The govt. should provide for old age pension for parents with no son. It should also provide free education and various subsidies on the birth of girl child.

3. **Compulsory registration of births** at the time of delivery. This requires transparency in the hospitals.

4. **Girl Empowerment** - Free & compulsory education for girls along with job reservations & share in property.

5. **Strict punishment for defaulters & awareness programs** should be organized. Ex. Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao campaign.

6. **Moral Education** - Children should be morally educated since childhood to encourage feeling of equality.

**Conclusion**

Laws can prevent female infanticide but the real solution lies in changing the social mindset of the people because it is the people that make up a society. Everyone must realize that today’s girl child holds India’s bright future in her hands because if development is not engendered it is endangered.

**1.7. World Hindi Day: 10th January**

- Every year, the World Hindi Day is celebrated on January 10, marking the anniversary of the first World Hindi Conference held in 1975.
- The first World Hindi Conference was inaugurated by the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. Since 1975, the World Hindi Conference has been organised in different countries like India, Mauritius, UK, Trinidad and Tobago, United States etc.
World Hindi day was first observed on 10th January 2006. It is in addition to the National Hindi Divas which is celebrated annually on 14th September.

National Hindi Divas is celebrated on 14 September 1949 to mark the day on which the Constituent Assembly adopted Hindi written in Devanagari script as the official language of the Union.

Some Facts About Hindi

- Hindi as a language is the fourth most spoken language in the world. Hindi is the first language of around 430 million people around the world.
- Apart from India, the language is also spoken in Nepal, Guyana, Trinidad and Tobago, Suriname, Fiji and Mauritius. Hindi and Nepalese share the same script – Devnagari.
- In India, Hindi is mother tongue of around 258 million people.
- The first book believed to be published in Hindi was *Prem Sagar*. The book was published by Laloo Lal and depicted tales of Krishna.
- Hindi is one of the seven Indian languages that can be used to make web URLs.
- Constitutional Provision for Hindi Language: Official Language Policy of the Union has been explained in detail under Article 120 (Part – V), Article 210 (Part – VI) and especially in Part XVII, Article 343, 344, and from 348 to 351.


- An Expert Group under the Chairmanship of former Finance Secretary Shri Sumit Bose was constituted to study the objective criteria for allocation of resources to States and identification and prioritization of beneficiaries under various programme using Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) data.
- It has submitted its report to the Ministry of Rural Development.
- It was the interim advice of this group that led to the issuance of appropriate guidelines by the government to make inter–state allocation based on SECC data to cover households under the Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana (PMAG) and the Deendayal AntyodayaYojana - National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM).
Key Recommendation

- The use of SECC data and its TIN (Temporary Identification Number) would enable the government to improve the efficacy of its interventions and will result in an improved outcome.

- It also talked about regular updation and verification of SECC data to eliminate the need to mount standalone SECC in the long run, which would put an additional burden on public resources.

- The SECC has the potential to move from being a census-like socio-economic database to becoming the core of a functioning Social Registry Information System (SRIS).

- SRIS would result in several advantages in implementation of social sector schemes. It has the potential to streamline programme administration, reduce duplication of benefit and fraud, saving on time and costs for both programme applicants and service providers.

- It would also be able to monitor the living standards of beneficiaries over time, better targeting of vulnerable & marginalized sections of the society, and enable expansion of the coverage of the programmes.

Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC)

- The Union Ministry of Rural Development commenced the Socio Economic and Caste Census (SECC) in 2011 through a comprehensive door to door enumeration across the country. This was the first time such a comprehensive exercise had been carried out for both rural and urban India.

- It is also expected to generate information on a large number of social and economic indicators relating to households across the country.

Objectives

- To enable households to be ranked based on their Socio- Economic status. State Governments can then prepare a list of families living below the poverty line.

- To make available authentic information that will enable caste-wise population enumeration of the country.

- To make available authentic information regarding the socio economic condition, and education status of various castes and sections of the population.
**Few Facts About SECC**

- SECC 2011 has three census components which were conducted by three separate authorities but under the overall coordination of Department of Rural Development.

- Census in Rural Area has been conducted by the Department of Rural Development (DoRD). Census in Urban areas is under the administrative jurisdiction of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA). Caste Census is under the administrative control of Ministry of Home Affairs: Registrar General of India (RGI) and Census Commissioner of India.

- The SECC data is respondent based input along with the counter sign of enumerator. The data is the "revealed data" by the household to the enumerator. However, collected data also meets the approval of Gram Sabha and Panchayats.

1.9. **Sparsh Leprosy Awareness Campaign**

- Government has launched a campaign named as the ‘Sparsh’ Leprosy Awareness Campaign on Jan’ 30 (Anti-Leprosy Day) to create awareness about this disease.

- As part of this campaign, Gram Sabhas will be organised in coordination with allied sector of health department/ ministries — Panchayati Raj Institutions, Rural Development, Urban Development, Women and Child Development and Social Justice and Empowerment, among others.

- The thrust of this campaign is to promote community participation in diagnosis and treatment of leprosy in its early stages- from centralised top-down delivery-driven approach to decentralised community-based demand-driven approach.

- The plan is to empower local communities to take over the responsibility of sensitising people to not stigmatise and discriminate against those affected and to spread awareness about the disease to help in early diagnosis and treatment.

- This awareness campaign includes the following important information about leprosy to help leprosy affected people:
  - Free of cost multi drug therapy is available at all government dispensaries, health centres and hospitals to provide complete treatment to the leprosy affected people.
This facility is given to all the leprosy affected people because only timely treatment prevents disability (caused by leprosy).

Some important symptoms of leprosy are like light color patches, redness, swelling and nodule formation over the skin. Person, who notice any of the above symptoms, must contact his/her nearest government dispensaries, health centres and hospitals in order to get early treatment and remain away from disability.

**Anti-Leprosy Day**

- 30th January, the Martyrdom Day of the Gandhi Ji, is celebrated every year as the Anti Leprosy Day all over the India in order to re-memorize his selfless efforts and care for the people affected by the infectious disease leprosy (also known as the Hansen’s disease).

- **World Leprosy Day** is annually observed around the world on the last Sunday of January.

  The day was initiated in 1954 by French philanthropist and writer, Raoul Follereau, as a way to raise global awareness of this deadly ancient disease and call attention to the fact that it can be prevented, treated and cured.

*To be read with Section 1.3. of Part 5 (September Issue) of CA Magazine.*

### 1.10. Varishtha Pension BimaYojana

- The Cabinet gave its approval to Varishtha Pension BimaYojana (VPBY) 2017. The scheme will be launched as part of financial inclusion and social security.

- With banks being flush in deposits in the wake of demonetisation and the credit offtake remaining weak, many of them have cut interest rate on bank deposits, hurting the income of those who depend on interest income.

- This scheme will be launched with an intention to isolate senior citizens from reduced interest rate.

**Features Of This Scheme**

- Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana 2017 will be implemented through Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) during the current financial year.

- It is aimed at providing income security to elderly persons aged 60 years and above against a future fall in their interest income due to uncertain market conditions.
• It will provide an assured pension based on a guaranteed rate of return of 8% for 10 years.

• Senior citizens can opt for pension on a monthly/quarterly/half-yearly/annual basis.

• The government will pay to LIC the differential return, which is the difference between the return generated by the insurer and the assured return of 8%, as subsidy on an annual basis.

• The government’s statement on Varishtha Pension Bima Yojana 2017 does not mention the maximum amount that can be invested under the scheme.

1.11. **National Action Plan for Children, 2016**

• National Action Plan for Children, 2016 (NPAC) was launched on National Girl Child Day (January 24).

• The NPAC has been developed by the Ministry of Women & Child Development.

**Features**

• The Action Plan has four key priority areas—**Survival, Health and Nutrition; Education and Development; Protection; and Participation.**

• The NPAC defines objectives, sub-objectives, strategies, action points and indicators for measuring progress under the four key priority areas and identifies key stakeholders for the implementation of different strategies.

• The plan also puts focus on new and emerging concerns for children such as online child abuse, children affected by natural and man-made disasters and climate change etc.

• The strategies and action points largely draw upon the existing programmes and schemes of various Ministries/Departments. However, for new and emerging issues related to children; it also suggests formulation of new programmes and strategies, as required.

• The plan takes into account the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and provides a roadmap towards achieving them through co-ordination and convergence with different stakeholders.

**Policy Framework for Children: Key Milestones**

• National Policy for Children, 1974
• Promotion and adoption of International Year of the Child (IYC), 1979
• National Policy for Education, 1986
• Adoption of 1990s’ World Child Survival and Development Goals, 1990
• Accession to UN CRC, 1992
• National Nutrition Policy 1993
• National Health Policy, 2002
• National Charter for Children, 2003
• National Plan of Action for Children, 2005
• Adoption of Guidelines for NCPCR, 2011 and 2015
• National Policy for Children 2013
• National Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Policy 2013
• India New Born Action Plan 2014

1.12. **New Scheme For Promotion Of Rural Housing In The Country**

The Union Cabinet has approved a new scheme for promotion of rural housing in the country. The Government would provide interest subsidy under the scheme. Interest subsidy would be available to every rural household who is not covered under the Pradhan Mantri Aawas Yojana (Grameen), PMAY(G).

**Features**

- The scheme would enable people in rural areas to construct new houses or add to their existing pucca houses to improve their dwelling units.
- The beneficiary who takes a loan under the scheme would be provided interest subsidy for loan amount upto Rs. 2 Lakhs.
- **National Housing Bank (NHB)** would implement the scheme.
- The Government would provide net present value of the interest subsidy of 3 % to the NHB upfront which will, in turn, pass it to the Primary Lending Institutions (Scheduled Commercial Banks, NBFCs etc.). As a result, the equated monthly installment (EMI) for the beneficiary would be reduced.
• Under the scheme, the Government would also take necessary steps for proper convergence with PMAY-G including technical support to beneficiary through existing arrangements.

• The new scheme is expected to improve housing stock in the rural areas, as well as create employment opportunities in rural housing sector.

For detailed housing scenario in India, plz refer Section 1.10 in Part 6 (Oct 2016) of CA magazine.

1.13. Population Based Prevention, Screening And Control Programme For NCD

• As part of the National Health Mission, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare is launching population-based prevention, screening and control programme for five common non-communicable diseases, namely Hypertension, Diabetes, and Cancers of oral cavity, breast and cervix.

• This programme is expected to be launched on February 4th coinciding with World Cancer Day.

Need For Such Scheme

• NCDs which are Cardiovascular Diseases (CVDs) such as heart attacks and stroke, Diabetes, Chronic Respiratory Diseases (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Diseases and Asthma) and Cancer inter alia account for over 60% of all mortality in India. Of these, nearly 55% are premature mortality. This imposes a financial and social cost on families and the country.

• According to the World Economic Forum, India stands to lose $ 4.58 trillion (Rs 311.94 trillion between 2012 and 2030 due to non-communicable diseases.

• These conditions do not exhibit symptoms until complications set in, it is essential to detect them early. Early detection of NCDs not only enables onset of treatment but also prevents high financial costs and suffering.

• For some cancers, survival rates are good when they are detected and treated in the early stages.

• It also serves to raise health awareness among people to lead healthy lifestyles.

Features

• In the first phase, the population based screening component will be rolled out in 100 districts in 32 states and UTs with about 1000 sub-centres undertaking screening.
- ASHAs will also be capturing information on major risk factors so that persons at risk could be counselled on leading healthy lifestyles to prevent onset of NCDs.
- In subsequent phases, Chronic Obstructive Respiratory diseases will be included and the programme will be scaled up to cover other districts.
- Support to states will also be provided for community health promotion and prevention efforts, and referral and treatment.

1.14. 'ShaGun' - a Web-portal for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan

- It has been prepared by World Bank in collaboration with Ministry of Human Resource Development.
- ShaGun aims to capture and showcase innovations and progress in elementary education sector of India by continuous monitoring of the flagship scheme - SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA).

Facts About ShaGun

- ShaGun, which has been coined from the words 'Shala' meaning schools and 'Gunvatta' meaning quality, has been developed with a twin track approach.
- First, is the repository with an engaging interface that focuses on positive stories and developments in the field of school education.
- In this repository, best practices will be documented in the form of videos, testimonials, case studies, and images, which will display state-level innovations and success stories that are driving improvements in performance under SSA.
- This repository has a decentralised management structure that enables state governments to choose, upload and manage their own content.
- Secondly, it has an online monitoring module to measure state-level performance and progress against key educational indicators.
- It has been developed to collect and report data which will enable the government and administrators to track the efficiency with which SSA funds are being utilised and the results that this is delivering.

Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA)

- SSA is an Indian Government programme aimed at the universalisation of elementary education "in a time bound manner", as mandated by the 86th Amendment to the Constitution of India making free and compulsory education to
children between the ages of 6 to 14 a fundamental right.

- SSA has been operational since 2000-2001 to provide for a variety of interventions for universal access and retention, bridging of gender and social category gaps in elementary education, and improving the quality of learning.

- SSA interventions include inter alia, opening of new schools and alternate schooling facilities, construction of schools and additional classrooms, toilets and drinking water, provisioning for teachers, regular teacher in service training and academic resource support, free textbooks& uniforms and support for improving learning achievement levels / outcome.

1.15. **Panel Formed To Look Into Haj Subsidy Issue**

- Centre has formed a six-member committee to look into the Haj subsidy issue in light of a 2012 Supreme Court order.

- The Supreme Court had in 2012 directed the Union government to gradually reduce and abolish Haj subsidy by 2022. It had asked the government to invest the subsidy amount of approximately Rs 650 crore a year then on educational and social development of the community.

- The committee will figure out whether the pilgrims can travel to Saudi Arabia paying less in the absence of such subsidy.

- Recently, Saudi Arabia has increased India’s annual Haj quota by 34,500.

**What Is Haj Subsidy?**

- Haj subsidy is given to Indian Muslim Haj pilgrims by the Indian government, having originated during the British colonial era.

- The Haj Committees Act was implemented by British rulers alongside a series of other acts in order to appease Muslim demands before the partition of India.

- No other country has Haj subsidies.

- In 1973, the rules changed to offer Indian Muslims a concessionary ticket if they fly to Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq and Iran on India's national airline, Air India.

- At present, the Ministry of Civil Aviation provides subsidies to Indian Muslim pilgrims through the Haj Committee of India, which includes the airfare subsidy as well as subsidies for the pilgrims to travel domestically to reach the Haj points and assist with meals and accommodation.
What Is The Controversy?

- All Haj air traffic is now shared by Air India and Saudi Arabia’s national airline.
- It has become the most controversial point of discussion on India’s Haj subsidy, with many beginning to view it as a subsidy for the airline rather than the Muslim community.
- Many believe that if Haj travel is opened to more airlines, the airfare will be cheaper.
- Also, Many Muslim leaders have called for the abolishment of the Haj subsidy, arguing that it is “un-Islamic” as according to the Quran, only those Muslims who can afford the expenses should perform Haj.
- There is an argument that India is constitutionally a secular state, it should not subsidize expenses related to performance of religious rituals of any religion and this includes Haj.

1.16. **NITI Ayog Has Called For Review of RTE Act**

NITI Aayog has called for a review of the provision of Right To Education Act that stipulates that children who don’t perform well cannot be held back up to class VIII.

**What Is Wrong With The Provision**

- The RTE Act, which aims to provide primary education to all children aged 6-14 years, stipulates that no child can be held back in a grade, regardless of his performance, all the way up to the 8th grade.
- The purpose behind this provision is to minimize the drop-out rate, since demoralization resulting from failing a class leads to children withdrawing from school altogether.
- However, this means that a child is entitled to an 8th grade diploma even if he cannot recognise a single letter or a number if he has spent 8 years in school. Thus, the good intention behind the norm is detrimental to the learning process.

**Conclusion**

- Even ASER (Annual Status of Education Report) has found out that more than 50% of the fifth graders cannot read second standard level text.
Though unnecessary pressure demoralizes the children, complete removal of it takes away the pressure to learn and to compete. Therefore, a reform is indeed necessary so as to balance the provisions of the RTE act.

**Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009**

- The 86th Amendment Act, 2002 inserted *Article 21-A* in the Constitution of India to provide *free and compulsory education* of all children in the age group of *6 to 14 years* as a *Fundamental Right*.

- Consequently, RTE Act, 2009 was enacted to ensure that every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards.

**RTE Provisions**

- Right of children to *free and compulsory education* till completion of elementary education in a neighbourhood school.

- ‘Compulsory education’ means obligation of the appropriate government to provide free elementary education and ensure compulsory admission, attendance and completion of elementary education to every child in the 6 to 14 age group.

- ‘Free’ means that no child shall be liable to pay any kind of fee or charges or expenses which may prevent him or her from pursuing and completing elementary education.

- It lays down the norms and standards relating to *Pupil Teacher Ratios (PTRs), buildings and infrastructure, school-working days, teacher-working hours.*

- It prohibits (a) physical punishment and mental harassment; (b) screening procedures for admission of children; (c) capitation fee; (d) private tuition by teachers and (e) running of schools without recognition,

- It provides for development of *curriculum in consonance with the values enshrined in the Constitution*, and which would ensure the all-round development of the child, building on the child’s knowledge, potentiality and talent and making the child free of fear, trauma and anxiety through a system of *child friendly and child centred learning*.
2. POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

2.1. Re-Promulgation Of Ordinances Is A Fraud On The Constitution, says SC

Hearing a case related to a 1989 Bihar law for taking control of the management of Sanskrit schools in the state through an ordinance, the Supreme Court recently gave its verdict which is discussed next.

**Krishna Kumar Singh Vs. State Of Bihar Case 2017**

- Ordinances are *not immune from judicial review/scrutiny* when the “power has been exercised to secure an *oblique purpose*.”
- In case the President or the Governor was *influenced by ulterior motives* to promulgate the ordinance, such an act would amount to a *fraud*.
- Ordinances issued under Articles 123 or 213 have the same force and effect as a law enacted by the legislature, but it *must be laid before the legislature* and will cease to operate six weeks after the legislature has reassembled, or even earlier if a resolution disapproving it is passed.
- Laying an ordinance before Parliament or the state legislature is mandatory because it is the *legislature’s prerogative to determine the need for promulgation* of an ordinance and whether it ought to be approved or disapproved.

**Rationale Of The Judgement**

- The re-promulgation of ordinances is *constitutionally impermissible* and is a "*subversion of democratic legislative processes*".
- Re-promulgation defeats the constitutional scheme under which a *limited power* to frame ordinances has been conferred on the President and the Governors.
- The authority to issue ordinances is *not absolute*, but is “*conditional upon a satisfaction that circumstances exist* rendering it necessary to take immediate action” i.e. this route is to be taken only in *‘extraordinary’ situations*.

**Criticism of Ordinance Raj**

- *Threat to Legislature’s sovereignty*: The ordinance route poses threat to the sovereignty of Parliament and the state legislatures which have been constituted as primary law-making bodies under the Constitution.
- *Against the doctrine of Separation of Powers*: the legislature (Parliament at the Centre, and the Assemblies and the Councils in the States) is tasked with the primary job of making laws; the executive’s role is to administer the country by
enforcing these laws; and the judiciary interprets, reviews the laws and ensures that they are constitutionally compliant.

- **Avoids fruitful debates on the floor of the house:** The government use its ordinance-making power when it is reluctant to face the legislature and is apprehensive about its approval from the houses, which could be due to opposition’s stance on the issue or if the govt. lacks numbers in the upper house.

- **Undemocratic:** This power is time and again misused for political gain and subverting and circumventing the parliamentary process. It takes away the right of legislature to debate on the matters of public importance.

**Conclusion**

This verdict will place a vital check on rampant abuse of ordinance-making power by the executive. It would also lead to more bills going to the floor of the house for meaningful debates and avoid the tendency of the executive to circumvent the parliamentary process through ordinance route.

**Article 123**

- It gives ‘legislative’ power to President. When both Houses of Parliament are not in session, if the President is satisfied that “circumstances exist which render it necessary for him to take immediate action, he may promulgate an Ordinance if there is urgent need to have a law on a matter of public importance.

- The promulgated ordinance has similar effect as an act of parliament.

- However, every ordinance must be laid and approved by both houses of the parliament within 6 weeks from the reassembling.

- If not placed and approved by both houses of the parliament after reassembling, it becomes invalid or lapses.

**Article 213 has similar provision wrt State legislature.**

**2.2. SC Held That Seeking Votes On Religious Basis Is A Corrupt Act**

**Why In News**

SC held that an appeal for votes during elections on the basis of religion, caste, race, community or language, even that of the electorate, will amount to a ‘corrupt practice’ and call for disqualification of the candidate.
Basis Of The Judgement

- **Section 123 (3) of the RPA** mentions that the corrupt practices would include “the appeal by a candidate or his agent or by any other person with the consent of a candidate or his election agent to vote or refrain from voting for any person on the ground of ‘his’ religion, race, caste, community.”
  - The law tries to achieve the purity of elections, which required that appeals to caste, religion, language, and community be kept out of the electoral process.
  - Its basic purpose was to “curb communal, fissiparous and separatist tendencies” in the country.

- **Interpretation of the law:** The section does not specify whether “his” refers to the speaker seeking votes, or the audience from whom votes are being sought. The “his” in this clause was understood thus far as a reference to the candidate. The judgement has now expanded the interpretation to include the electorate (voters) as well.

- **Section 153A of the IPC:** Promoting enmity in different groups on grounds of religion, race, place of birth, residence, language, etc., and doing acts prejudicial to maintenance of harmony.

Criticism Of The Judgement

- **Historic deprivations and discrimination:** Social reality of our country is that masses have suffered historic discriminations and deprivations on the ground of religion, caste and language. This judgement would further take away the attention from these grave injustices.

- **Against the central theme of the Constitution:** Religion, caste and language are part of the central theme of the Constitution to produce a just social order.

Conclusion

Though electoral politics in a democratic polity is about social mobilisation, for a democracy to survive, there must be agreement on certain basic essentials “which could unite and hold citizens together”. Religion, language, caste, etc. are the markers of identity that threaten it. Therefore, the CJI opined that secularism required the complete exclusion of religion from public life.
2.3. Colonial Criminal Tribes Denotified But Remain Unclassified

The colonial category of “criminal tribes” has been “denotified” but many communities remain unclassified.

Criminal Tribes Act (CTA)

- It refers to various pieces of legislation enforced in India during British rule after the Revolt of 1857, to tighten their control over India.

- The first was the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871. The Act was extended to Bengal Presidency and other areas in 1876. Later, with Criminal Tribes Act 1911, it was extended to Madras Presidency as well.

- The Act went through several amendments in 1876, 1911, and many more. Finally, the Criminal Tribes Act 1924 incorporated all of them whose provisions included:
  - It notified certain communities (tribes as well as castes) as criminal tribes on the notion that they were religiously and professionally criminal.
  - Since they were described as ‘habitually criminal’, restrictions on their movements were also imposed; adult male members of such groups were forced to report weekly to the local police.
  - Their movements were curtailed. They could not shift their residence at will and had to take proper permission before any travel or movement.

- Present situation: The 1924 Act was repealed in August 1949 and former "criminal tribes" were denotified in 1952, when the Act was replaced with the Habitual Offenders Act (HOA) 1952 of Government of India, and in 1961 state governments started releasing lists of such tribes. It states that a habitual offender is one who has been a victim of subjective and objective influences and has manifested a set practice in crime, and also presents a danger to society.

What’s Wrong With Their Present Status

- The HOA effectively re-stigmatized the already marginalised "criminal tribes". The previously criminalised tribes still suffer a stigma, because of the ineffective nature of the new Act.

- Today, there are 313 Nomadic Tribes and 198 Denotified Tribes of India, yet the legacy of the past continues to haunt the majority of 60 million people belonging to these tribes, especially as their historical associations have meant continued alienation and stereotyping by the police and the media as well as economic hardships.
• A large number of them can still only subscribe to a slightly altered label, *Vimukta jaatis*, or "Ex-Criminal Tribes".

• Many of these denotified tribes continued to carry considerable social stigma of the Act and come under the purview of the 'Prevention of Anti-Social Activity Act' (PASA).

• Many of them have been *denied the status of Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) or Other Backward Classes (OBC)*, which would have allowed them to avail Reservation under Indian law, which reserves seats for them in government jobs and educational institutions, thus most of them are still living Below Poverty Line and in sub-human conditions.

• Over the course of the century since its passing, the criminal identity attached to certain tribes by the Act, was internalised not just by the society, but also by the police, whose official methodology, even after repeal of the Act, often reflected the characteristics of manifestation of an era initiated by the Act, a century ago, where characteristic of crimes committed by certain tribes were closely watched, studied and documented.

**Opinions Of Statutory And International Bodies**


• The *UN's anti-discrimination body Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)*, in 2007, noted that "the so-called denotified and nomadic which are listed for their alleged 'criminal tendencies' under the former Criminal Tribes Act (1871), continue to be stigmatised under the Habitual Offenders Act (1952), and asked India to repeal the Habitual Offenders Act (1952) and effectively rehabilitate the denotified and nomadic tribes.

  o According to the body, the HOA doesn't show a marked departure in its intent, only gives the formed notified tribes a new name i.e. Denotified tribes.

  o Hence the stigma continues so does the oppression, as the law is being denounced on two counts, first that "all human beings are born free and equal", and second that it negates a valuable principle of the criminal justice system—innocent until proven guilty.

• *National Commission for Denotified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (NCDNSNT)* of Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, in 2008, recommended:
o Same reservations as available to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes be extended to around 110 million people of denotified, nomadic or semi-nomadic tribes in India;

o The provisions of the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989 should be applicable to these tribes also.

o Today, many governmental and non-governmental bodies are involved in the betterment of these denotified tribes through various schemes and educational programs.

• **NCDNT 2016 Report**

  o After Independence, the erstwhile aborigines were classified as scheduled tribes, the untouchables were classified as scheduled castes and others included in the backward classes.

  o Although, many of the denotified, nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes are spread among SC/ST/OBC, many are still not classified anywhere and have no access to socio-economic benefits, whether education, health, housing or otherwise, except a few states like Maharashtra, Gujarat, etc, some of these communities figure in various classifications in the states such as Backward Tribe (Puducherry), Most Backward Classes (Tamil Nadu), Extremely Backward Classes (Bihar), “original settlers” in Arunachal Pradesh, Primitive Tribes (Jharkhand/ Odisha), Hill Tribes (Assam) etc.

  o There are many anomalies in terms of identification of these communities, from state to state. In some states they are called “tribal settlers” while in others, “hidden tribes” etc.

  o The Commission made a recommendation to the Government of India to write to all state governments to form a district-level Grievances Redressal Committee under the District Collector to hear the grievances of these communities/groups/tribes.

2.4. **DGFT Has Banned The Import Of Exotic Skins**

• Directorate General Of Foreign Trade (DGFT) has banned the import of skins of **reptiles and fur of minks, foxes and chinchillas**.

• This landmark decision will spare the lives of tens of thousands of animals from the **exotic leather industry**.
• This decision comes in the wake of campaigning for a ban by People for Animals (PFA), Humane Society International/India (HSI/India) and People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

• ‘Cruelty-free’ alternatives: Animal rights bodies have hailed the decision, saying that the country is now emulating other nations across the world in adopting “cruelty-free” alternatives to exotic skins. With so many alternatives available, there is no need or justification for wearing animal skins or fur. Animals are not fabric.

**Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)**

- It is an attached office of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and is headed by Director General of Foreign Trade.
- It was formed in 1991 when liberalization in the economic policies of the Government took place.
- It aims at the regulation and promotion of foreign trade.
- Keeping in line with liberalization and globalization and the overall objective of increasing of exports, DGFT has since been assigned the role of “facilitator” of exports/imports.
- It can prohibit, restrict and regulate exports and imports.
- It is entrusted with the responsibility of implementing various policies regarding trade for example, Foreign Trade Policy.

2.5. **Aadhaar Made Mandatory For MNREGS Work**

- From April 1, 2017 workers in rural areas enrolled under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), which mandates 100 days of work for a household a year, must have Aadhaar.

- Those who have registered themselves under the scheme will be required to give proof of possession of Aadhaar or undergo the enrolment process till March 31.

- **Section 7** of the Aadhaar (Targeted Delivery of Financial and other Subsidies, Benefits and Services) Act, 2016 has been invoked by the govt.
  - It mandates that when the government gives subsidy benefit or service from the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI), an *individual can be asked to undergo authentication or furnish proof of possession of Aadhaar.*
  - The expenditure for the MGNREGS is met from the CFI.
• **Benefits:**
  - It will prevent leakages of subsidies and ensure that the beneficiaries get their due.
  - It will widen the ambit of DBT scheme which is aimed at checking leakages of welfare funds.

2.6. **SC Made It Mandatory To Implement VVPAT In Electronic Voting Machines**

• The Aim is to ensure 100% fair and transparent elections.

• **Vote Verifier Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) System:** In this, when a voter presses the button for a candidate of his choice in the EVM, a paper ballot containing the serial number, name of the candidate and poll symbol would be printed for the voter.

• It is an independent verification system for voting machines designed to allow voters to verify that their votes were cast correctly, to detect possible election fraud or malfunction and to provide a means to audit the stored electronic results.

2.7. **SC Ordered The Govt. To Audit Nearly 30 Lakh NGOs And File A Compliance Report**

• SC has issued directions to the government to audit nearly 30 lakh NGOs which received public funds but consistently failed to explain how they spent the money.

• It also said that it is necessary to start criminal and civil action by the Central government and CAPART (Council for Advancement of People’s Action and Rural Technology). Till now those failing to file their balance sheets are merely blacklisted.

• **General Financial Rules, 2005** mandate a regulatory mechanism for the NGOs but it is still not in place because the govt. is unaware about it.

• SC ordered:
  - the government to frame guidelines for their accreditation, the manner in which these organisations should maintain their accounts and the procedure for recovery in case they fail to submit their balance sheets.
  - the government to file a compliance report by March 31, 2017.
2.8. **SC Said That Giving Cash Instead Of Land To Farmers Who Lost Their Fertile Lands To The Mega Dam Project Is “Tentatively” Not Acceptable**

- SC observed this while hearing the plight of landless victims of the Sardar Sarovar Dam Project.

- As per the Narmada Tribunal Award and the Supreme Court verdicts, all adult sons were entitled to 5 acres of cultivable and irrigable land, and any discrimination would lead to the violation of the constitutional rights of the ousters.

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<th>Sardar Sarovar Dam</th>
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<td>It is a gravity dam on the <em>Narmada river</em> in Gujarat, India.</td>
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<tr>
<td>It is the <em>largest dam</em> and part of the Narmada Valley Project, a large hydraulic engineering project involving the construction of a series of large irrigation and hydroelectric multi-purpose dams on the Narmada river.</td>
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2.9. **Madras HC Observed That Talaq Certificates Issued By Chief Kazi Have No Legal Sancitity**

- Triple Talaq is a Muslim social practice by which a man divorces his wife.

- The certificates issued by Kazis are done in an arbitrary manner without reconciliation and even without the knowledge of women concerned. Such certificates issued in an arbitrary manner are causing undue hardship to Muslim women.

- Kazis were once considered judicial authorities under Muslim Personal Law. Their legal sanctity was abolished when the British regime established the courts.

- Recently Allahabad High Court had termed triple talaq as unconstitutional.

*For details on Triple Talaq, please refer Section 2.11 in Part 8 (Dec 2016) and Section 2.3 in Part 5 (Sept 2016) of CA Magazine.*

2.10. **EC Barred Important Public Officials From Hearing Public Appeals Till Polls**

- The Election Commission has issued an order barring Chief Ministers, Ministers and political appointees in the five poll-bound States from hearing appeals filed by people before statutory bodies till the election process was over.

- EC has said that the hearings by politicians “may have direct or indirect influence on voters and may also disturb the level-playing field” during the elections.
2.11. Why FM Radio Stations Aren’t Allowed To Broadcast News, Ask SC

Why In News

- SC has picked up this issue from a PIL filed by the NGO Common Cause regarding broadcasting of news and current affair programmes.
- PIL has asked for a judicial declaration to end the monopoly of the Prasar Bharati Corporation, which owns and operates All India Radio, over news broadcasting and current affairs programmes.

Rationale Of The Petition

- It said that the government’s prohibition was in clear violation of the Supreme Court’s landmark verdict in 1995 case of Ministry of Information & Broadcasting vs. Cricket Association of Bengal where it ruled that “airwaves are public property to be used to promote public good and expressing a plurality of views, opinions and ideas.”
- Violation of FRs – The right to freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a) also includes the right to information, which encompasses diverse interpretations of news and current affairs.
- Not in sync with democracy – No other democratic country had similar curbs. None of the USA’s 14,000-plus radio stations, the 2,000-odd stations in Spain or the 1,000-plus stations each in Italy, France, Greece and Australia are barred from airing news and cultural affairs.

Background Of Govt. Policy Guidelines And Regulations

- Nov 28, 2008: The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) recommended that FM broadcasters “may only be permitted to broadcast news, taking content from AIR, Doordarshan, authorised TV news channels, United News of India, Press Trust of India and any other authorised news agency without any substantive change in the content”.
- July 25, 2011: a minor change was made under Phase III policy guidelines for FM to allow broadcast of FM radio news bulletins of AIR without any addition or modification.
- Feb 10, 2013: During the third National Community Radio Sammelan, the Union Information and Broadcasting Ministry said that community radio stations would not be allowed to broadcast news but they could re-transmit unedited AIR news.

Conclusion
Bench has rightly directed the government to explain the series of orders systematically passed between 2008 and 2013 to gag private radio from airing their own news and current affairs broadcasts. The rationale behind the government’s want to control news on radio, which covers almost the entire population, even the rural masses, must be explained to the public, in a functional democracy like India.

2.12. **Jallikattu Row**

**Background**

- **Jallikattu or Eruthazhuvuthal or Manju virattu** is a traditional *bull-taming sport* organised in Tamil Nadu during the time of harvest festival of *Pongal*. According to some historical accounts, the practice dates back to as far as 2000 years ago.

- The sport involves a natively reared stud that is set free inside an arena filled with young participants (mostly men in their 20s). The challenge lies in taming the bull with bare hands by grabbing it by horns or tail or wrestling it into submission.

**Chronology Of Decisions Related To Jallikattu**

- In 2011, Environment Ministry banned the use of bulls as performing animals. The scope of this ban extended to Jallikattu and other animal races across the country.

- In 2014, the SC upheld the ban by the Environment Ministry when the 2011 notification was challenged.
  - It held that “**bulls cannot be allowed as performing animals**, either for Jallikattu events or bullock-cart races in the state of Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra or elsewhere in the country.”
  - It also identified “**the 5 freedoms** of animals”, including freedom from hunger, thirst and malnutrition, freedom from fear and distress, freedom from physical and thermal discomfort, freedom from pain, injury and disease, and freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour.
  - It asked Parliament to “**elevate rights of animals to that of constitutional rights**, as done by many of the countries around the world, so as to protect their dignity and honour”.

- In 2016, the Environment Ministry modified its earlier notification (issued by UPA in 2011) and declared that the sport could continue despite the existing ban.

- The 2016 notification of the Environment Ministry was in direct contravention with the top court order, and was duly challenged by animal welfare organisation such as...
People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) and Animals Welfare Board of India (AWBI). Subsequently, a stay order was issued by the court.

- In 2017, the SC restrained the Tamil Nadu government from conducting Jallikattu.

### Arguments In Favour Of Jallikattu

- **Tamilian culture and Dravidian pride:** It is an ancient tradition, probably some 2000 years ago, with many references found in Dravidian literature. The protestors argue that the ban impinges on the cultural identity of the indigenous population of Tamil Nadu.

- **Village economy and livelihood has been hit:** With the SC ban, the price of the bulls that are specially reared for this purpose has come down from mere Rs. 2lakh to Rs. 5000. Also, rural poor who make accessories for the bull have been rendered jobless.

- **Villagers’ sentiments:** Breeders often claim that they specially rear the bull for this purpose and treat them like their own children and spend large sums of money towards their upkeep.

- **Preserve the indigenous breeds:** Jallikattu is one of the few ways left to rear indigenous breeds after the govt.’s programme that preferred cross-bred cows such as Jersey and Holstein and Friesian over indigenous breeds for better milk yields. It has also been argued that though the yield is less, indigenous cows’ milk is more nutritious.

### Arguments Against Jallikattu

- **Traditional vs. Present day Jallikattu:** Jallikattu in its present form is of relatively recent origin, intended to make bulls run wildly for the sake of spectacle. Instead of the traditional form of one man against one animal, latter-day jallikattu is a mass-participant ritual of hundreds of men chasing a bull and trying to hold on to its hump or stop it by pulling at or twisting its tail.

- **Animal rights abuse:**
  - PETA has been rallying hard against the sport citing animal rights abuse. Its research found that the bulls were being disoriented, deliberately. The bulls’ tails were allegedly bitten and twisted; stabbed, punched and dragged on the ground.
  - AWIB has argued that Jallikattu bulls are physically and mentally tortured for the pleasure and enjoyment of human beings. They have also produced
visual evidence for torture and cruelty to bullocks in Maharashtra’s bullock-cart races.

- Jallikattu or bullock-cart races conducted in this way have no historical, cultural or religious significance in Tamil Nadu or Maharashtra, and that the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (PCA) Act, 1960, must supersede any such practice.

**Conclusion**

- Few feudal traditions have survived in modern, progressive India in the name of masculine valour and cultural pride. When the Supreme Court banned this spectacle that took a heavy toll on both the animals and the human participants, it did so after attempts at its regulation and the orderly conduct of this “sport” were deemed a failure.

- Efforts that are now on to nullify the effect of the Supreme Court judgment through the ordinance route thus carry a serious risk of judicial reproach.

- The proper course for the Centre and the State government is to persuade the Supreme Court that a jallikattu that does not involve, or at least almost eliminates, cruelty to animals and that guarantees the safety of spectators and participants alike is indeed possible. It is all right if popular sentiment can influence legislation, but it cannot undermine the rule of law.

**2.13. Delhi HC Said That Proximity Rule For Minority Schools Is “Unconstitutional”**

- The Delhi High Court termed “unconstitutional” the AAP government’s guidelines to minority unaided schools to grant admission to minority community students in nursery class only from the neighbourhood or from within a radius of 1 km.

- The court was hearing petitions filed by two minority schools - Mount Carmel School and Somerville School against the government notification that the private schools on government land will have to compulsorily admit students from within 1km radius.

- The court raised following question to prove its points:
  - How can you tell the minority schools to admit minority students from within one kilometre? How can you interfere in their operations. It is against the settled principle of law as per Article 13 of the Constitution which reads as: All laws inconsistent with or in derogation of the fundamental rights shall be void.

- The SC declined to hear an appeal filed by the committee of private unaided schools against a Delhi High Court order that schools located on land allotted by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) should take prior permission from the government before raising their fee structure.

- The Delhi High Court, in its order, had said that the quantum of fees to be charged by private unaided schools is subject to regulation by Dept. of Education under the *Delhi School Education Act, 1973*. Therefore, they “cannot indulge in profiteering and commercialism” of education.

- This is a historic decision for those parents whose children are studying in private schools. The government wants to keep their fee and admission process transparent.

2.15. **RBI Has Turned Down EC’s Request To Enhance Cash Withdrawal Limit**

- The RBI has turned down the Election Commission’s request to enhance the cash withdrawal limit for nominated candidates in the 5 poll-bound States, from **Rs 24,000 to Rs 2 lakh per week**, till the declaration of results on March 11.

- The ECI had desired that the current limit on cash withdrawal for candidates for the coming elections may be enhanced in order to ensure that the candidates are able to bear the expenses of election expenditure up to the statutory limits.

**The Issue**

- The EC expressed its serious concerns “about the cursory manner in which this issue has been dealt with and it appears that the RBI has not realised the gravity of the matter.”
• The candidates from different political parties, particularly in the rural areas, are facing a lot of problems due to imposition of limits on withdrawal of cash from banks.

• **As per the EC directive, each candidate has to open a separate bank account.** All receipts and payments of the candidates during the election process have to be routed through that account.

• The EC pointed out that the entire election process lasted only 3 to 4 weeks and therefore, the total amount that could be withdrawn would be only Rs 96,000, “as against the statutory limit of expenditure of Rs 28 lakh in Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, and Rs 20 lakh in Manipur and Goa, as fixed by the Central government on February 28, 2014.”

**Conclusion**

The Election Commission reiterated that in order to facilitate proper conduct of elections, it was imperative that its directions were complied with. Therefore, the RBI should reconsider its decision so as to ensure that the candidates don’t indulge in any sort of malpractices to meet the requirement of their election expenditure.

2.16. **SC Appointed Committee Of Administrators (CoA) To Oversee The BCCI**

• The Supreme Court appointed a 4-member Committee of Administrators (CoA) headed by former Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India Vinod Rai to oversee the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

• Members include former CAG Vinod Rai, first woman Test cricketer Diana Edulji, historian Ramachandra Guha, and IDFC Ltd MD and CEO Vikram Limaye.

• The four will function as the interim bosses of the BCCI and run the day-to-day administration of the cricket body till the Lodha reforms are fully implemented and elections held.

• Earlier, the SC removed Anurag Thakur as the President and Ajay Shirke as the Secretary of the BCCI for not complying with its orders and stalling the Lodha reforms.

• The BCCI CEO was ordered to submit a report to the CoA detailing the level of compliance achieved by the BCCI and its members in adopting the Lodha recommendations upheld by the court on July 18, 2016.

• After this, the committee has been given 4 weeks to scrutinise the compliance achieved and report to the Supreme Court. The next date of hearing is March 27.
The scrutiny would help in the ‘smooth implementation’ of the Lodha reforms.

**Lodha Panel**

It was formed on January 22, 2015 by the Supreme Court after the Mudgal committee, appointed as an investigator into the IPL 2013 scandal, submitted its report. The committee was chaired by the retired Chief Justice of India, RM Lodha.

The panel was constituted to recommend steps required *to clean the cricket sport in the country* and bringing the game into repute following matchfixing and corruption scandals in the past.

It recommended the following reforms in the structuring and governance of cricket in India:

1. **One association of each state will be a full member** and will have the *right to vote*. The Lodha panel proposed the relegation of Railways, Services and Universities as Associate members.

2. It recommended *separating the governing bodies of the Indian Premier League (IPL) and BCCI*. It also proposed restricting the powers of the IPL Governing Council.

3. The panel stated that BCCI *office bearers must not be ministers or government servants* and that they must have not held office in the BCCI for a period of 9 years or 3 terms. The Lodha committee said that *no BCCI office-bearer can have more than 2 consecutive terms*.

4. Office-bearers in BCCI should *not* be beyond the age of 70 years.

5. It recommended *legalisation of betting* with an inbuilt mechanism.

6. It proposed the constitution and establishment of a *players association*.

7. For the sake of *transparency*, BCCI was asked to upload all its rules and other details on the official website.

8. **Ethics Officer** will decide on conflict of interest.

9. The BCCI should come under the purview of the *Right to Information (RTI) Act*.

10. According to the panel, cricketing matters of the BCCI should be handled by former players while non-cricketing matters would be handled by CEO along with six assistant managers and two committees.
3. ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

3.1. Inclusive Development Index 2017

- India has been ranked 60th among 79 developing economies, below neighboring China and Pakistan, in the inclusive development index.

- World Economic Forum’s ‘Inclusive Growth and Development Report 2017’ said that most countries are missing important opportunities to raise economic growth and reduce inequality at the same time because the growth model and measurement tools that have guided policymakers for decades require significant readjustment.

Key Highlights Of Report

- Lithuania tops the list of 79 developing economies that also features Azerbaijan and Hungary at second and third positions, respectively.

- While India is placed at the 60th spot, many of the neighbouring nations are ahead in the rankings. China is ranked at the 15th position, Nepal at 27th, Bangladesh at 36th and Pakistan at 52nd.

- Two BRICS nations, Russia and Brazil, are at 13th and 30th places, respectively.

- India, with a score of only 3.38, ranks low among 79 developing economies, despite its growth in GDP per capita is among the top 10 and labour productivity growth has been strong.

- India scores well in terms of access to finance for business development and real economy investment.

Why India Has A Low Rank In This Index

- India’s debt-to-GDP ratio is high, which creates doubts about the sustainability of government spending.

- India’s labour force participation rate is low, informal economy is large and many workers are vulnerable to employment situations with little room for social mobility.

- New business creation continues to be held back by corruption, underdeveloped infrastructure, and the large administrative burden involved in starting and running companies.

- India needs more progressive tax system to raise capital for expenditures in infrastructure, health care, basic services and education.
To respond more effectively to social concerns, economic policy needs a new compass setting, broad-based progress in living standards, and a new mental map in which structural reform is re-imagined and reapplied to this task.

**About Inclusive Development Index (IDI)**

- The IDI, prepared by World Economic Forum, is based on a set of key performance indicators (12 in number) that provide a multidimensional assessment of living standards.
- The index ranks 109 countries according to their current level of inclusive development, and also provides a view on recent performance over 5 years.
- In order to provide a more complete measure of economic development than GDP growth alone, the index has three pillars – *Growth and Development, Inclusion and Intergenerational Equity, and Sustainability*.

### 3.2. N.K Singh Panel Submits Reports On FRBM Act

- The N.K. Singh panel submitted its report on revising the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act to Mr. Jaitley. The report is yet to be made public.
- The five-member committee — including RBI Governor Urjit Patel, former Finance Secretary Sumit Bose, Chief Economic Advisor Arvind Subramanian, and National Institute of Public Finance and Policy Director Rathin Roy — was constituted in May 2016 to review the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act.
- Though the report is yet to be made public, Mr Singh explained that the first Volume of the report dealt with the issues of fiscal policy, fiscal roadmap, international experience and the recommendations on these issues. Volume 2 is on the international experience, Volume 3 deals with the Centre and states, and Volume 4 incorporates papers by lots of experts. This will make a difference to the quality of debate.
- Fiscal management becomes all the more important post-demonetisation and the resultant slump in consumption expenditure. The view is that the government could be tempted to increase public spending to boost consumption. In this context, the review committee’s recommendations might be very important.
- The government has set a fiscal deficit target of 3.5% of GDP for FY17, a lower target than the 3.9 per cent set for 2015-16, which was achieved.
Background Under Which The Committee Was Constituted

- The context of the committee was that India’s FRBM for the centre and the states had fixed, rigid targets for the fiscal deficit that were to be achieved and sustained over the medium term. This was done in the context of high debt to GDP levels, and the idea was once discipline is enforced this ratio would fall.

- This has happened, with the debt-GDP ratio lower than it was. Now that it is lower, there is a time to respond to the inherent cyclicality of the economy. Many countries have a system of flexibility in fiscal targets, such that in a slowdown it can borrow more than the average, provided it borrows less than average during expansionary phases.

3.3. Draft National Steel Policy 2017

- The Union Steel Ministry’s draft New Steel Policy 2017 estimates Rs 10 lakh crore of additional investment to create capacity that will meet anticipated crude steel demand of around 255 million tonne (mt) by 2030-31.

- A major part of that demand is likely to come from infrastructure like highways, oil refineries, bridges, airports, urban infrastructure, water transportation and sanitation, construction, engineering, automotive, and energy among others.

Key Highlights Of Draft Policy

- The Steel Ministry has proposed setting up greenfield steel plants along India’s coastline to tap cheap imported raw materials such as coking coal and export the output in a more cost-effective manner. Establishment of steel plants along the coast under the aegis of Sagarmala project will be undertaken.

- The policy, which envisages to more than double India’s domestic steel production capacity to 300 million tonnes by 2030-31, anticipates a requirement of Rs 10 lakh crore of fresh investments to meet that goal. India has emerged as the 3rd largest steel producer globally with a production level of 91 mt and a domestic steel capacity of 122 mt in 2015-16.

- The Policy expects at least 11 lakh new jobs being created in the process. The steel sector presently employs about 25 lakh people and has a capacity of little over 120 million tonnes.

- The draft policy lays out two alternatives of its vision — “to create a globally competitive steel industry that promotes inter-sectoral growth” or “to create a self-
sufficient steel industry that is technologically advanced, globally competitive and promotes inclusive growth.”

- While it focuses on impediments like high input costs, availability of raw materials, import dependency and financial stress plaguing the sector, projections made under the policy for a couple of factors are all still under discussion, such as the demand and production of sponge iron.

- To cut down reliance on expensive imports of coking coal, the policy has mooted gas-based steel plants and technologies such as electric furnaces to bring down the use of coking coal in blast furnaces.

- Public sector firms in the steel sector should aim for economies of scale and will be encouraged to divest their non-core assets through mergers and restructuring, according to the policy.

- However, in a key admission the policy recognizes shortage of metallurgical coal as a major disadvantage of the steel sector, the draft steel policy aims at increasing supply of domestic coking coal to cut dependence on imports by half. India currently imports around 70% of its coking coal requirement. The National Steel Policy also aims at achieving increased domestic availability of washed coking coal so as to reduce import dependence on coking coal by 50% by 2030-31.

- The new policy has set an aim for India to become a net exporter of steel by 2025-26, while it also recognizes that weak global economic prospects indicate Indian steel industry will have to strongly depend on domestic consumption for its future growth.

3.4. Cabinet Approves Amendment In M-SIPS

- The Union Cabinet has given its approval for amendment in the Modified Special Incentive Package Scheme (M-SIPS) to further incentivize investments in Electronic Sector and moving towards the goal of ‘Net Zero Imports’ in electronics by 2020.

- Besides expediting investments into the Electronics System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) sector in India, the amendments in M-SIPS are expected to create employment opportunities and reduce dependence on imports. The projects already received under the scheme have the potential to generate employment to the extent of upto one million persons (direct and indirect).

- The Policy covers all States and Districts and provides them an opportunity to attract investments in electronics manufacturing. So far, 243 applications have been
received under the scheme, out of which 75 applications have been approved involving investment proposals of Rs. 17,997 crore.

**Key Highlights Of Amendment**

- The applications will be received under the scheme upto 31\textsuperscript{st} December 2018 or till such time that an incentive commitment of Rs 10,000 crore is reached, whichever is earlier.
- In case the incentive commitment of Rs 10,000 crore is reached, a review will be held to decide further financial commitments.
- The incentives will be available for investments made within 5 years from the date of approval of the project.
- Approvals will normally be accorded to eligible applications within 120 days of submission of the complete application.
- A unit receiving incentives under the scheme, will provide an undertaking to remain in commercial production for a period of at least 3 years.
- The Appraisal Committee recommending approval of project will be chaired by Secretary, Ministry of Electronics and IT.
- A separate Committee headed by Cabinet Secretary and comprising of CEO, NITI Aayog, Secretary Expenditure and Secretary, MeitY will be set up in respect of mega projects, envisaging more than Rs. 6850 crore (approx. USD 1 Billion) investments.

**Background**

- The Cabinet had, in July, 2012 approved the M-SIPS to provide a special incentive package to promote large scale manufacturing in the Electronic System Design and Manufacturing (ESDM) sector.
- The scheme provides subsidy for capital expenditure - 20\% for investments in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and 25\% in non-SEZs. The Scheme was amended in August, 2015 for scope enhancement and simplification of procedure.
- The Scheme has attracted investments in the ESDM sector to the tune of Rs. 1,26,838 crore, of which investments of around Rs. 17,997 crore have been approved by the MeitY. The M-SIPS has been able to create positive impact on investment in electronics sector.
3.5. **Govt Approves Listing Of State-Owned General Insurance Companies**

- The government has decided to list five state-owned general insurers and said it will bring down its stake in these insurance companies to 75% from current 100%. It (listing) could be either by fresh equity or offer for sale.

- These companies are New India Assurance Company, United India Insurance, Oriental Insurance Company, National Insurance Company and General Insurance Corporation of India (GIC).

- **Benefits:** The listing will allow companies to raise capital for expansion and not be dependent on government. Besides, the government expects listing to improve corporate governance and risk management practices leading to improved efficiency. A greater focus on growth and earnings can also be expected.

- The government has allowed foreign insurance players to raise their stake in their joint venture to 49 per cent. Earlier, only up to 26 per cent FDI was permitted.

- The insurance companies in the private sector and the public sector have been in the business for a while now and it is time that not only the incumbent shareholders get the opportunity to liquidate a portion of their shareholding at a profit and make up for the loss of dividends in its initial years of existence but also give the opportunity to the companies by infusing more capital into it so that they continue to maintain their capital adequacies and also have more funds available at a very low cost to meet their future expansion plans.

3.6. **India Rejects Attempts Of EU, Canada For Global Investment Agreement**

- India will not allow investment to become part of any global agreement that allows investors to challenge governments in an international tribunal, commerce and industry.

- India said this after EU and Canada have signed a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement which has a new approach on investment protection and investment dispute settlement that moves towards establishing a permanent multilateral investment court.

- “They want to make this a global template for resolving investor-state disputes…We rejected it completely. We are opposed to any multilateral approach to investment,” India said.

- The proposal made at an informal breakfast meeting of trade ministers of select countries was also rejected by Argentina, Brazil and Japan.
• However, EU is keen to negotiate the Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) with India before it begins talks on the Bilateral Trade and Investment Agreement (BTIA)- the much delayed comprehensive trade agreement with EU.

• Last year, New Delhi had asked all countries with which India has investment protection agreements, including the EU, to re-negotiate those pacts on the basis of the new model text of BIT.
4. **INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

4.1. **Israel-Palestine Issue**

**Why In News**

- The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed a resolution condemning all Israeli settlements on Palestinian land as having no legal validity and amounting to violation under international law.

- The U.S.A. abstained from voting and allowed it to pass. The Council then adopted the draft resolution by 14 votes in favour with 1 abstention (United States).

**About The UNSC Resolution And Its Impacts**

- This is the first Security Council resolution in more than 35 years to deal with Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

- The Council in the resolution reiterated its demand that Israel should immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory including East Jerusalem and West Bank.

- The resolution underlined that *it would not recognize any changes to the 4 June 1967 lines* (decided in negotiations after 1967 war) agreed by the two sides through negotiations.
• The Council called for immediate steps to prevent all acts of violence against civilians, including acts of terror as well as all acts of provocation and destruction through follow up actions.

• Though the UNSC resolution has declared the Israeli settlements in West Bank and Jerusalem as illegal and in violation of International laws and human rights, it will not have any immediate effects on the Israel settlements and on the Israel – Palestine conflict as the resolution is *non-binding*, effectively creating only guidelines and recommendations.

• It would require follow-up action at the United Nations for it to have an immediate effect and Israeli’s are worried about what that follow up action can mean for Israel.

• The resolution calls on countries to recognize a difference between Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories while dealing with Israel. This could lead to *sanctions against products from Israeli settlements in the West Bank*.

• Palestinian leaders observed that if Israel does not abide by the resolution they can pursue cases against Israeli leaders at the International Criminal Court (ICC) under the Geneva Convention. The ICC is already conducting an ongoing investigation into Israeli actions in the Palestinian territories.

### The Israel-Palestine Conflict

• For centuries there was no such conflict. In the 19th century the land of Palestine was inhabited by a multicultural population – approximately 86 percent Muslim, 10 percent Christian, and 4 percent Jewish – living in peace.

• **Zionism**
  
  o In the late 1800s, a group in Europe decided to colonize this land. Known as Zionists, they represented an extremist minority of the Jewish population.
  
  o Their goal was to create a Jewish homeland, and they considered locations in Africa and the Americas, before settling on Palestine.
  
  o At first, this immigration created no problems. However, as more and more Zionists immigrated to Palestine – many with the express wish of taking over the land for a Jewish state – the indigenous population became increasingly alarmed. Eventually, fighting broke out, with escalating waves of violence.
  
  o Hitler’s rise to power, combined with Zionist activities to sabotage efforts to place Jewish refugees in western countries, led to increased Jewish immigration to Palestine, and conflict grew.
• **UN Partition Plan**

  o Finally, in 1947 the UN decided to intervene. However, rather than adhering to the principle of “self-determination of peoples,” in which the people themselves create their own state and system of government, the UN chose to revert to the medieval strategy whereby an outside power divides up other people’s land.

  o Under considerable Zionist pressure, the UN recommended giving away 55% of Palestine to a Jewish state – despite the fact that this group represented only about 30% of the total population, and owned under 7% of the land.

  ![Palestinian Loss of Land 1947 to Present](image)

• **1947-1949 War**

  o The approval of the UN plan sparked attacks carried out by Arab irregulars against the Jewish population in Palestine.

  o On May 14, 1948, one day before the British Mandate (as Palestine was a part of Ottoman empire, later British empire) expired, Britain declared “the establishment of a Jewish State in Eretz-Israel, to be known as the State of Israel”.

  o The declaration was stated to be "by virtue of our natural and historic right and on the strength of the resolution of the United Nations General Assembly".
The termination of the British mandate over Palestine and the Israeli Declaration of Independence sparked a full-scale war (1948 Arab–Israeli War) which erupted after May 14, 1948.

By the end of the war, Israel had conquered 78% of Palestine; and a new map was drawn up, in which every city, river and hillock received a new, Hebrew name, as all vestiges of the Palestinian culture were to be erased.

### 1967 War

Also known as a six day war, Israeli forces launched a highly successful surprise attack on Egypt, Israel occupied the final 22% of Palestine that had eluded it in 1948 – the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

It also occupied parts of Egypt (since returned) and Syria (which remain under occupation).

### Peace Process

Oslo accord initiated in 1993 is an ongoing peace process mediated by America to broker a peace treaty between Israelis and Palestinians.

The goal of this peace process is to bring about a "final status agreement" which would establish a Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank in exchange for Palestinians agreeing to permanently end attacks on Israeli targets -- a formula known as "land for peace."

### Current Status

Currently the West Bank is nominally controlled by the Palestinian Authority and is under Israeli occupation. Israeli troops enforce security restrictions on Palestinian movement and activities in the area.

Gaza is controlled by Hamas (an Islamist fundamentalist party) and is under Israeli blockade but not ground troop occupation. The two Palestinian groups (Fatah and Hamas) have reconciled to create coalition Palestinian government for the first time since 2007.

The peace negotiations between the Israel and Palestine have failed subsequently and in July and August 2014 the conflict escalated to a full-on war between Israel and Hamas.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a huge issue in the region. Israel has fought multiple wars with each of its four neighbors (Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon) all of whom nominally support the Palestinian national cause.
Israel has peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan but its relations with the other neighbors, Syria and Lebanon are tensed. Other than its immediate neighbors, the three most important regional states in the conflict are Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

Regarding global response, Non-Muslim countries recognize Israel's legitimacy and maintain diplomatic relations with it but most are critical of Israel's treatment of the Palestinians and ongoing occupation of the West Bank.

Global public opinion at present is generally more sympathetic to the Palestinian cause creating real concern among Israelis that an international boycott movement could pick up some support.

- **Impediments to Peace Process**

  - Israel continues to expand West Bank settlements which Palestinians see as a de facto campaign to erase the Palestinian state outright. In practice, Israeli control of the West Bank means military administration of a territory full of Palestinians who are living under Israeli authority.

  - The Palestinians remain politically divided between Fatah and Hamas after the shared government's effective collapse and thus are unable to negotiate jointly.

  - Israel’s denial to negotiate with a government that includes Hamas.

  - The current right-wing Israeli government is skeptical of concessions to the Palestinians.

  - The Palestinians having essentially decided that Israel isn’t serious about peace and have launched a campaign for statehood in international institutions aimed at pressuring Israel into peace.

- **The Way Forward**

  - The suggested way for the resolution of the age old conflict between Israel and Palestine is the "two-state solution" that would create an independent Israel and Palestine.

  - The idea is that Israelis and Palestinians want to run their countries differently. Israelis want a Jewish state and Palestinians want a Palestinian one.
Because neither side can get what it wants in a joined state the only possible solution that satisfies everyone involves separating Palestinians and Israelis.

**What is Anti-semitism?**

Anti-semitism is the term used to refer the belief or behavior hostile toward Jews just because they are Jewish. It may take the claim of religious teachings that proclaim the inferiority of Jews for instance or political efforts to isolate, oppress or otherwise injure them. It may also include prejudiced or stereotyped views about Jews.

**What is Zionism?**

- Zionism is Israel's national ideology. Zionists believe Judaism is a nationality as well as a religion according to that Jews deserve their own state in their ancestral homeland, Israel.
- Modern Zionism, building on the longstanding Jewish yearning for a "return to Zion" began in the 19th century — right about the time that nationalism started to rise in Europe.

**What is the Nakba?**

The mass eviction in the 1948 war which uprooted 700,000 Palestinians from their homes creating a refugee crisis that is still not resolved. Palestinians call this mass eviction the Nakba — Arabic for "catastrophe" and its legacy remains one of the most intractable issues in ongoing peace negotiations.

**Palestinian Liberation Organization:**

- The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) is the national representative of the Palestinian people.
- It runs the Palestinian National Authority (PA), the semi-autonomous government tasked with managing the Palestinian territories until it makes a deal with Israel.
- Fatah, the secular nationalist political party that's dominated Palestinian politics for decades controls the PLO and PA.
- In practice, the PLO runs the government in the West Bank but not in Gaza which is governed by Hamas (Islamic fundamentalist party)
- It also conducts peace talks on behalf of the Palestinians but its authority to implement those deals has in the past been hampered by poor relations with Hamas.
Q. Reflecting upon the latest UNSC resolution on Israel-Palestine issue suggest measures to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict.

4.2. Britain’s Stand On Brexit

In the recent speech Prime Minister of U.K. Ms. Theresa May had cleared all the speculation regarding the future planning of Brexit and cleared the U.K.’s stand on various issues related to the country’s exit from European Union.

**Key Issues**

*European Single Market*

- The Prime minister has mentioned that though Britain would *not be the member of European single market*, Britain's trade relations with EU will be transformed in such a way that free trade continues via a new Free Trade Agreement *(from earlier membership of European single market to comprehensive Free Trade Agreement)*

- This agreement will give British companies the maximum freedom to trade with and operate within European markets and let European businesses do the same in Britain.

- The Agreement may take in elements of current Single Market arrangements in certain areas (such as on the export of cars and Lorries or the freedom to provide financial services across national borders) as it is difficult to start again from scratch when Britain and the remaining Member States have adhered to the same rules for so many years.

*Regarding Partial Or Associate EU Membership*

It was cleared that the United Kingdom is leaving the European Union completely. The United Kingdom will not accept partial membership of the European Union or associate membership of the European Union that leaves the country half-in, half-out.

*Britain’s Contribution Of Huge Sums To EU Budget*

- As Britain is leaving the membership of EU and it will no longer be member of the Single Market hence it will not be required to contribute huge sums to the EU’s budget.

- There may be some specific European programmes in which the country might want to participate which will be decided independently by the Britain only.
**Customs Union**

- The Prime Minister's emphasis was on trade agreements with countries outside Europe. There are concerns regarding full Customs Union membership that it prevents Britain from negotiating on their own comprehensive trade deals.

- Therefore, she clarified that the Britain does not want to remain a member of the EU's Customs Union and hence will not be a part of Common Commercial Policy and will not be bound by Common External Tariff.

**Immigration Policies**

- She stated that the U.K. always wants immigration especially high-skilled immigration and will always welcome individual migrants as friends.

- But it was made clear that Britain will adopt the controlled immigration policy which was the main issue during the referendum campaign and Brexit will help implement the measures to control high immigration to Britain from Europe.

**Regarding Rights of EU Citizens in UK, UK Citizens in EU**

Britain guarantees the rights of EU citizens who are already living in Britain and the rights of British nationals in other member states and will keep protecting those rights as before.

**Regarding Jurisdiction of European Court of Justice over UK**

The U.K. will be no more under the control of European court and it will take back control of laws and bring an end to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice in Britain.

**Common Travel Area With Ireland An Important Priority**

The UK shares a land border with the EU and maintaining that common travel area with the republic of Ireland will be an important priority for the UK for the further deliberations.

**Conclusion**

- The British Prime Ministers speech cleared the air and has set the tone for future.

- The result of the referendum was not a decision to turn inward and retreat from the world because Britain's history and culture is profoundly internationalist but to escape the negative fallouts of the free market.

- Britain is a European country and cannot shed away its shared European heritage hence complete cut off from Europe is unimaginable.

- The relationship of Britain is getting transformed to the new and invigorative partnership with EU which will change in its form and shape.
4.3. China’s White Paper On Asia Pacific Security Cooperation

China elucidated its position on Asia Pacific security through its first white paper released in January 2017 and unveiled its future strategies and policies on Asia-Pacific security cooperation.

Key Highlights Of The White Paper

- China has proposed a concept of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security in the Asia Pacific Region through the white paper.
- The white paper considers the Asia Pacific region to be stable although it also recognises multiple destabilising factors that exist in the region.
- White paper highlights the areas of concerns in the region such as the nuclear crisis in the Korean Peninsula, the slow reconciliation process in Afghanistan, terrorism and maritime disputes.
- One of the key operative dictums included in the white paper was an advice or warning to small and medium countries in the region that they “need not and should not take sides among big countries.”
- For the settlement of disputes over territories and maritime rights, China asks the parties concerned to “respect historical facts” and seek a solution through negotiations under procedures of “universally recognised international law” and UNCLOS.
- The white paper appears to indirectly indicate that the US military deployment is a regional security challenge along with the increasing military preparedness of Japan.
- There is also recognition of terrorism, transnational crime and natural disaster as non-traditional security threats in the region.
- In order to enhance peaceful development in the region, the document outlines China’s commitment to fostering security through dialogue and cooperation and describes its six fold policy framework as:
  - Cooperation on economic development.
  - Seeking common grounds for cooperation with countries in the region while recognising differences.
  - Adherence to multilateralism along with willingness to shoulder regional and global security responsibilities.
• Promotion of rule setting and improvement of the institutional safeguards for peace and stability.
• Intensify military exchanges and cooperation.
• Proper resolution of differences and disputes.

- The white paper clarified the China aims for a non-confrontational new model of major country relations with the US, strategic partnership of co-ordination with Russia, closer partnership with India and strives for closer relations with Japan.
- Maritime security in the Asia-Pacific region is a core focus of the white paper and has also been listed among the regional hotspots of security concern. The document highlights the growing non-traditional security threats (piracy, smuggling, drug trafficking, natural disaster and ecological concern) to maritime security.

**Relation With India**

- The white paper is largely positive about India which has been recognised among the four major powers in the Asia Pacific.
- China considers that its strategic partnership with India has further deepened since the signing of the China-India strategic and cooperative partnership for peace and prosperity in 2015.
- The white paper emphasizes high level bilateral visits and the frequent interactions between Prime Minister of India and President of China.
- Coordination and collaboration between India and China on various issues including in the WTO and on Climate Change has helped to safeguard the common interest of both countries as well as of other developing countries.
- Relations between the Indian and Chinese militaries have been considered as healthy and stable.

### 4.4. Second Raisina Dialogue

**Why In News**

- The Theme of the Dialogue for 2017 was -- "**The New Normal: Multilateralism with Multi-Polarity**".
The flagship geo-political conference was inaugurated by Prime Minister of India and was attended by delegates from 65 countries.

**Key Highlights**

- **PM of India**, in his opening speech, gave a list of India’s foreign policy priorities, security interests in the Indian ocean, bilateral relations with many countries.

  - **Pakistan and Terrorism**: In an indirect message to Islamabad, India urged the global world to isolate and ignore those who export terror.
  - **Peaceful South Asia**: India remained committed to vision for a “peaceful and harmonious” South Asia, and neighbourhood first.
  - **Globalisation**: Growing sentiment against trade and migration and rising parochial and protectionist attitudes are putting globalisation’s gains at a risk.
  - **China**: It has unprecedented business and commercial opportunities for India. However, it needs to show sensitivity and respect for core concerns and interest. Rising ambition and festering rivalries (in Asia) are generating visible stress points such as freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.
  - **CPEC**: The ambitious $45 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) connectivity project cannot override sovereignty as it runs through disputed parts of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK).
  - **United States**: US administration led by Donald Trump and India will further focus on building bilateral relationship.

**About Raisina Dialogue**

- Raisina Dialogue is an annual conference organised jointly by Ministry of External Affairs and the Observer Research Foundation (ORF).
- It is envisioned to be India’s flagship conference of geopolitics and geo-economics.
- The name of conference comes from Raisina Hill which is the elevation in New Delhi where Presidential palace of India, Rashtrapati Bhavan is located.
- It is structured as a multi-stakeholder, cross-sectorial conclave involving policy and decision makers including cabinet ministers from various Governments, high-level Government officials and policy practitioners, leading personalities from business and industry etc.
- The forum has been designed to explore prospects and opportunities for Asian integration as well as Asia’s integration with the larger world.
• It is predicated on India’s vital role in the Indian Ocean Region and how India along with its partners can build a stable regional and world order.

4.5. **Chagos Archipelago Dispute**

The British foreign administration has sought Indian assistance in resolving current tensions between the U.K., the U.S. and Mauritius over the future of the U.S. military base Diego Garcia, and the Indian Ocean Chagos Archipelago.

**Background**

- The Chagos Archipelago is a cluster of coral atolls in the middle of the Indian Ocean, ceded to Britain by France under the terms of the 1814 Peace Treaty of Paris.
• The archipelago is considered to have the most pristine tropical marine environment on the planet and the richest area of marine biodiversity.

• Its central geographical location in the maritime region between Africa, near East South Asia and Australia gives the archipelago’s largest island, Diego Garcia a unique strategic importance.

• UK Prime Minister persuaded Mauritian Premier in September 1965 to agree to the disintegration of the Chagos Islands from the colonial territory of Mauritius as a condition for the future independence of the country.

• The UK government issued an order in November 1965 proclaiming a new separate colony which shall be known as the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), consisting of the Chagos Islands, Aldabra, Farqhar and Desroches.

• Later the United Kingdom concluded a bilateral agreement with the United States on the “Availability for Defence Purposes of the British Indian Ocean Territory” followed by supplementary agreements.

• Diego Garcia is one of the largest, most costly and most secretive US military bases overseas.

• Post-independence Mauritian governments reclaimed sovereignty over the Chagos, pointing to the 1965 “excision” as a violation of the UN General Assembly’s Decolonization Resolutions.

• The Mauritian Constitution as amended in 1991 declares “the Chagos Archipelago including Diego Garcia” part of the national territory of Mauritius.

• The Mauritian claims have been supported by the African Union (AU) since 1980 and by a ministerial declaration of the Group of 77 and China at the 2012 UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in Doha.

• But the UK government invariably rejected the claims while conceding that the islands would eventually be “ceded” to Mauritius at some unspecified future time when they are no longer needed for defence purposes and in accordance with international law.

• The principal actors in the dispute are the U.K. government, the U.S. government and the Mauritian government along with the Chagos islanders whose exile from their home archipelago has now lasted more than forty years.
Issues Regarding The Dispute

• **Depopulation Of Chagos Islanders**
  o In 1967, all privately-owned copra plantations in the Chagos islands were expropriated or bought out to become British crown land.
  o By 1973, the entire resident population of the islands was “relocated” to make place for the military base, where US naval construction had started in March 1971.
  o The islanders, who with descendants, live in Mauritius but are desperate to return to their homeland.
  o The community lives in slum conditions, suffers high unemployment and complains of racist treatment by the indigenous population.

• **Regarding Law of the Sea**
  o Under the circumstances the dispute settlement options remaining for Mauritius practically narrows down to action under the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
  o The United Kingdom not only acceded the convention but also signed the UNCLOS Implementation Agreement on Straddling Fish Stocks “on behalf of” UK overseas territories including the BIOT.
  o Mauritius had objected to the United Kingdom’s signature on behalf of the BIOT by a declaration reaffirming its sovereignty and sovereign rights over these islands, namely the Chagos Archipelago which form an integral part of the national territory of Mauritius, and over their surrounding maritime spaces.
  o The UK defended its position by a counter declaration in respect of the BIOT.

• **Permanent Court of Arbitrations Ruling**
  In 2015 the Permanent Court of Arbitration has ruled the move of declaring “Marine Protected Area” around Chagos by Britain as illegal under UNCLOS and provided Mauritius all rights to utilize mineral resources over-there.

• **Current Status**
  o U.K. renewed the lease for Diego Garcia with U.S. for 20 years that is until 2036 consequently Mauritian government warned that it would take the matter to the International Court of Justice.
  o Mauritius aims to recover an undetermined amount of compensation to achieve restitution of property and declarations relating to the entitlement.
Diego Garcia is economically and strategically significant for U.K. therefore it wants Indian assistance to influence Mauritian government and help reach some agreement.

The British believe that ensuring the future of Diego Garcia would be in India’s security interest in the region too. Though India needs to carefully tread waters in an international dispute.

Q. What is Chagos archipelago dispute? Who are the main actors in the dispute? Explain India’s Prospective role in resolving the dispute and throw lights on the possibilities of resolving the dispute.

4.6. **International Sustainable Tourism Year**

**Why In News**

- The United Nations General Assembly has declared the year 2017 as an *International year of Sustainable Tourism for Development*.

- The United Nations Specialized Agency for Tourism -- World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) has been mandated to facilitate the organization and implementation of the International Year in collaboration with Governments, relevant organizations of the UN system, international and regional organizations and other stakeholders.

**Significance**

- According to UN resolution, well-designed and well-managed tourism makes a significant contribution to sustainable development, employment and cultural understanding.

- It provides a unique opportunity to advance the contribution of the tourism sector to the three pillars of sustainability – economic, social and environmental while raising awareness of the true dimensions of a sector which is often undervalued.

- The resolution also encourages all member states to promote international cooperation and to support sustainable tourism as a means of accelerating sustainable development, especially poverty eradication.

- The designation of an international year of sustainable tourism for development is highly significant not only for recognizing the importance of this sector but also for increasing awareness of the several social benefits it brings.
- Protection of cultural heritage, appreciation of the inherent values of different cultures and better understanding among different societies are some of the positive consequences that can be more recognized.

- This year is an opportunity to look at how tourism is affected by climate change and how emissions from the sector can be curbed along with finding ways for the industry to better adapt to the inevitable impacts of rising global average temperatures.

- International travel leads to greater awareness of the heritage of other civilizations and as a result an appreciation of other countries. According to the UN, this contributes to the strengthening of world peace.

**About Sustainable Tourism**

- **Sustainable Tourism** can be defined as: *Tourism that takes full account of its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, addressing the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment and host communities.*

- The sustainable tourism should:
  - Make optimal use of environmental resources that constitute a key element in tourism development, maintaining essential ecological processes and helping to conserve natural heritage and biodiversity.
  - Respect the socio-cultural authenticity of host communities, conserve their cultural heritage, traditional values and contribute to inter-cultural understanding and tolerance.
  - Ensure viable, long-term economic operations, providing socio-economic benefits to all stakeholders that are fairly distributed, including stable employment and income-earning opportunities and social services to host communities and contributing to poverty alleviation.
  - Sustainable tourism should also maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and ensure a meaningful experience to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices amongst them.

**About UNWTO**

- The **World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)** is the United Nations agency responsible for the promotion of responsible, sustainable and universally accessible tourism.

- As the leading international organization in the field of tourism, UNWTO promotes...
- tourism as a driver of **economic growth**, **inclusive development** and **environmental sustainability**.
- It offers leadership and support to the sector in advancing knowledge and tourism policies worldwide.
- UNWTO encourages the implementation of the **Global Code of Ethics for Tourism** to maximize tourism’s socio-economic contribution while minimizing its possible negative impacts.
- It is committed to promoting tourism as an instrument in achieving the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** geared towards reducing poverty and fostering sustainable development worldwide.
- UNWTO generates market knowledge, promotes competitive and sustainable tourism policies and instruments, fosters tourism education and training and works to make tourism an effective tool for development through technical assistance projects in over 100 countries around the world.
- UNWTO's membership includes **157 countries**, **6 Associate Members** and **500 Affiliate Members** representing the private sector, educational institutions, tourism associations and local tourism authorities.
5. **INDIA AND WORLD**

5.1. **India- Kenya**

President of the Republic of Kenya, Mr. Uhuru Kenyatta had paid a state visit to India from 10-12 January 2017.

**Key Highlights Of The Visit**

- The status of the agreements between the two countries until now was reviewed and it was decided that the **meeting of the Joint Commission (JCM)** should be held regularly.

- As both the countries are members of the Indian Ocean Littoral States, it was decided that the security and defence cooperation between the two countries should be consolidated.

- MoU on Defence Cooperation was signed to give boost to defence cooperation. The leaders called for the early convening of the first meeting of the Joint Working Group on Defence and Maritime Cooperation.

- Both sides agreed to enhance cooperation in areas of maritime surveillance, maritime security, sharing of white shipping information and joint hydrographic surveys.

- India also invited Kenya to participate in exhibitions like Aero-India and DEFEXPO.

- It was agreed to continue sharing information and expertise in counter terrorism, cyber security, combating drugs and human trafficking.

- Further it was agreed upon to build a bilateral legal framework with early conclusion of Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (an Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons) and a Memorandum of Understanding on Controlling Narcotics.

- The leaders condemned terrorism in all its forms and reiterated their commitment to work together for the finalization of Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

- For deepening trade and investment relations it was agreed that both the nations will work together to encourage their respective public and private companies to explore trade and investment opportunities while improving ease of doing business. The Joint Trade Committee was tasked to explore further ways of enhancing trade cooperation.

- In the first meeting of Joint Technical Committee on Housing it was decided that the Joint Business Council will be revived.
• Both the nations agreed on the importance of sustaining cooperation in the Health and Pharmaceutical sector. *India has helped Kenya in the installation of a telecobalt cancer therapy machine – the Bhabhatron II at Kenyatta National Hospital in Nairobi and has provided training to Kenyan oncologists under the India Africa Forum Summit Framework (IAFS III).*

• Both the countries reaffirmed the importance that they attach to the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and agreed to work towards finalizing the agreement on Cooperation in the Blue Economy.

• It was reiterated that the reforms of the United Nations and its principal organs are required to make the institution more democratic, representative, transparent and efficient.

**India-Kenya Relations**

*See Part 3 (July 2016) of CA Magazines*

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### 5.2 India-Rwanda

President of Rwanda Mr. Paul Kagame along with a business delegation had visited India from 9-11 January 2017.

**Key Highlights Of The Visit**

• Rwanda has become the 25th co-signatory country to India’s initiative of the *International Solar Alliance*. The alliance is vastly important to Rwanda for advancing new solar technologies.

• *Export Targeted Irrigated Agriculture Project* was fast tracked. It would benefit the people of Rwanda through construction of watershed works, farm mechanization and establishment of post harvest processing units of agricultural produce.

• It was affirmed that terrorism is a serious threat to humanity. Commitment to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations along with following *zero-tolerance policy on terrorism* was agreed upon by both the countries.

• Rwanda’s army men receive training in various Indian Army training institutions under the *Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC)* initiative of the Government of India. It was decided to further strengthen such military cooperation.

• The two sides noted with satisfaction that training and scholarships under *India Africa Forum Summit* process are an important mechanism for capacity building.
MoU on Forensic Sciences by the Gujarat Forensic Sciences University has been signed to support Rwanda’s National Police in modernizing Forensic investigations.

India welcomed the initiative of a direct flight from Kigali to Mumbai. Both sides continue to work on concluding a Bilateral Air Services Agreement and an agreement for the exemption of visa for diplomatic and official passport holders.

Both sides agreed to strengthen exchanges and cooperation in culture, tourism, people-to-people links, especially exchanges between the youth two countries.

Why Strategic Partnership Between India And Rwanda

- India and Rwanda share common values and mutual respect and share the common goal of rapid economic development, enhancing global peace, ensuring security and eliminating the menace of cross-border terrorism.
- Both the countries have broad based bilateral cooperation spanning over the past two decades.
- Rwanda acknowledges the role of India as an important partner for Africa’s development specially the initiatives under the India-Africa Forum Summit.
- Both the nations have recognized the unreached potential and resolved to maximize the economic potential of the relationship to reflect the ongoing transformation of their economies and the global economic order.
- The United Nations’ structures need to be more representative of the current realities that reflect the concerns and diversities of the developing world and Rwanda supported India’s quest for permanent membership in U.N. Security Council.

5.3. **INDIA-PORTUGAL**

Indian origin Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa had visited India and attended Pravasi Bhartiya Divas as a chief guest of the event.

Key Highlights Of The Visit

- Both the countries decided to exchange sector-specific trade and investment delegations and agreed to convene the 4th session of the Joint Economic Committee meeting in
Lisbon to chart a roadmap for enhancing trade and investment.

- Recognizing the opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation in the defence sector, a *Memorandum of Understanding on defence cooperation* was signed.

- MoU was signed for promoting closer cooperation between the two countries in wind, solar and hydro-electricity sectors.

- **MoU on Start Ups** was signed and it was decided to have regular exchanges between Start-Up India and Start-Up Portugal to boost business and enterprise has been signed.

- To leverage ICT for economic growth and development, boost digitization and e-governance the two nations signed the **MoU in the area of Information Technology, Electronics and Communications**.

- It was decided to look forward for early conclusion of the **MoU on Public Administration and Governance Reforms**.

- **MoU to boost Agricultural Trade** was signed with the objective of expediting phytosanitary certification of products, enhancing two-way market access, investment, technology cooperation and exchange of expertise.

- Emphasizing the substantial opportunities presented by India’s ambitious Smart Cities, Clean India and other urban infrastructure programmes, the public and private sector entities of Portugal were invited to set up partnerships with Indian entities especially in water and waste management.

- It was decided that the 5th session of the Joint Science and Technology Committee will be held on 13-14 March 2017 in Portugal to announce new research projects and programmes of cooperation for joint implementation as well as to identify new collaborative research areas such as nano-science and nanotechnology among others of common interest.

**India-Portugal Relations**

**Background**

- India’s relations with Portugal are close and friendly. Relations between India and Portugal began amicably in 1947 after India’s independence and diplomatic relations were established in 1949.

- Bilateral relations however went into decline after 1950 over Portugal’s refusal to surrender its enclaves of Goa, Daman Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli on India’s west coast. By 1955 the two nations had cut off diplomatic relations, triggering a
crisis which precipitated the liberation of Goa by Indian military forces, ending Portuguese rule over Indian enclaves in 1961.

- With the signing of a treaty in New Delhi on December 31, 1974 with the new democratic Portuguese Government, the two Embassies were re-established and amicable bilateral relations were restored.

- In October 2005, Portugal extradited Abu Salem and Monica Bedi who were facing terror charges in India thus becoming the first European nation to do so.

- Portugal became the first European and western country and only the fourth outside the East Asia Summit to sign a MoU on the Establishment of the Nalanda University in India.

**Political Relations**

- Political relations between India and Portugal are warm and friendly. The election of Mr Antonio Costa, who is partially of Indian origin as the Prime Minister of Portugal in November 2015, has the potential to energise bilateral relations.

- The inception of the India-EU Summit in June 2000 during Portuguese’s Presidency of the European Union and the convening of the first India-EU Summit in Lisbon attest to the strength of the relationship.

- Portugal has a cross-party ‘India- Portugal Parliamentary Friendship Group’ which was reconstituted after the Parliamentary election in October 2015. On the Indian side too a similar reconstitution is under review.

- The India-Portugal Joint Commission on Economic Matters and the Foreign Office Consultations are the two key bilateral dialogue mechanisms.

**Relations at the Multilateral Forums**

- There is excellent state of cooperation between the two countries in the United Nations and other multilateral fora.

- Portugal supported India’s permanent membership to a reformed and expanded UN Security Council.

- Considering the urgent need to establish a comprehensive international legal framework to address the growing global menace of terrorism both the nations wanted for early adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism in the United Nations.
Recognizing the importance of the central role of UN in combating terrorism, the nations exhorted the international community to effectively implement the measures enumerated by the 1267 UN Sanctions Committee.

Portugal appreciated India’s joining of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in June 2016 and expressed the hope that India will achieve early membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).

**Economic Relations**

- The economic sector has unreached potential areas for both the nations though bilateral trade has been growing steadily during the past few years.
- Both countries have institutionalised the economic relations in the form of Bilateral Agreement on Trade, Economic, Industrial and Technical Cooperation.
- A Cooperation Agreement between the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) and the Portuguese Foreign Trade and Investment Agency (AICEP) was signed in 1992.
- A Cooperation Agreement between the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and the Portuguese Association of Industries (AIP) was signed in 1995 to strengthen trade and investment.

**Cultural Relations**

- Cultural Cooperation Agreement was signed between the two countries in 1980. Several Cultural Exchange Programmes (CEPs) have been implemented since.
- Both sides are considering a new MOU on Cooperation Programme in the fields of Language, Education, Science, Technology, Culture, Sports, and Media for 2016-19.
- Embassy of India, Lisbon in association with the Portuguese Yoga Confederation organised large-scale celebrations of the International Day of Yoga in Lisbon in 2015 and in 2016. The Portuguese Postal Service released a postcard on 21 June, 2015 to commemorate the first International day of Yoga.

**Indian Diaspora**

- Portugal has a large Indian origin Diaspora estimated at around 65,000. The migration of the community took place in two streams: firstly direct movement from India in smaller numbers from Goa, Daman and Diu before 1961 and thereafter in a pronounced flow after 1961, mostly of Gujaratis from Portugal’s former African colonies particularly Mozambique and Angola at the start of the decolonization process in Africa in 1975.
• Under the ‘Know Goa’ Programme sponsored by the Government of Goa, three Goan diaspora youth visited Goa in 2015. Similar participation is being considered under the Know India Programme (KIP) for Diaspora youth who wish to travel to India and reconnect with their roots.

Q. India-Portugal relations have undergone a complete transformation since India’s independence. Critically analyse.

5.4. Masood Azhar Blacklist Issue

Why In News
• India’s attempt of blacklisting major Pakistan-based terror mastermind Masood Azhar by U.N. committee has been again blocked by China.
• China vetoed the counter terror committee of the UN Security Council from blacklisting Azhar, leader of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) group.
• China’s blockade also poses a challenge on India’s plans to bring an international convention against terrorism (CCIT) under the aegis of the United Nations.
• In the past China has also opposed India’s membership into the elite Nuclear Suppliers Group and the UN Security Council.

China’s Opposition
• Officially though, China says that its veto on Azhar will allow more time for the committee to deliberate on the matter and for relevant parties to have further consultations given the different views among UNSC members on the matter.
• But in effect China’s efforts are aimed at favouring its ally Pakistan in South Asia. India is seen as a competitor and sometimes even a threat by China.
• India can’t focus on issues away from its immediate neighborhood due to tensions in South Asia. Any breakthrough in South Asia in terms penalising Pakistan with support from other countries would be seen as significant diplomatic win for India.
• Pakistan’s support for China within groupings like the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and others like the Non-Aligned Movement where China has no representation is one of the reasons for Beijing to extend support to Pakistan through the UNSC.
• Another reason is India’s growing proximity to the US that China definitely sees as a major challenge.
• Another reason could be China’s enmity with India is due to various border issues including the Tibet issue. India’s support to opposing parties to China in the South China Sea is yet another reason for Chinese opposition.

• The key role played by Pakistan in China’s One Belt One Road and Chinese investments in Pakistan along with its ambitious project CPEC makes it imperative for China to support Pakistan.

Al-Qaida Sanction Committee

• The Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee was established in October 1999 by the Security Council with the adoption of resolution 1267 for the purpose of overseeing the implementation of sanctions measures imposed on Taliban-controlled Afghanistan for its support of Osama bin Laden.

• The Committee is made up of all 15 members of the Security Council (permanent and ad-hoc member countries) and holds regular meetings in both formal and informal sessions.

• In addition to overseeing States’ implementation of the sanctions measures, the Committee maintains a list of individuals and entities with respect to Al-Qaida and other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al-Qaida Sanctions List.

• Any State may request the Committee to add names to the Al-Qaida Sanctions List.

About 1267 U.N. Resolution

• The 1267 List was established in 1999 after the US embassies were bombed in Kenya and Nairobi.

• Individuals and groups who are “listed” by the 1267 Committee are subject to: a) a travel ban; b) an arms embargo; and c) an asset freeze. For the individuals who are on the list, it is a “prison without walls”.

• In 2001, after an attack on several targets within the United States, it was renamed and broadened to target Al Qaeda as well as the Taliban.

• The resolution was thus adopted to serve a political purpose within a specific conflict. However, it has since come to serve other states in their political pursuits, such as Russia in its Chechnyan conflict and the Philippines in its internal conflicts.

About Masood Azhar

• Masood Azhar is the founder and one of the leaders of the terrorist outfit Jaish-e-
Mohammed (JeM).
- Apart from India, JeM is a designated terrorist organization in many countries including the US, the UK, Australia, Canada and has been blacklisted by the UN.
- Masood Azhar is the mastermind behind most of JeM’s militant activities and is on the list of India’s most wanted terrorists.

**Terrorist Activities in India**
- In 1994 Masood Azhar was arrested in India for entering the country on a forged passport.
- In 1999 Pakistani militants hijacked an Indian Airlines aircraft flight at Kandahar and negotiated his release in lieu of 155 Indian hostages. It is following this release that Azhar went on to set up the JeM.
- Azhar was the prime suspect in Parliament attack oof 2001 which killed 9 people.
- Following the 2008 Mumbai blasts and terror attacks, India demanded hand over a number of terrorists featuring on India’s most wanted list including Masood Azhar from Pakistan.
- On 2 Jan 2016, a group of heavily armed militants attacked Indian Air Force base at Pathankot in Punjab. According to Indian authorities all available evidence points to the involvement of Jaish-e-Mohammed operatives in the incident.

### Comprehensive Convention for International Terrorism (CCIT)
- The CCIT was proposed by India in 1996 with the objectives:
  - To have a universal definition of terrorism that all 193-members of the UNGA will adopt into their own criminal law.
  - To ban all terror groups and shut down terror camps.
  - To prosecute all terrorists under special laws.
  - To make cross-border terrorism an extraditable offence worldwide.
- The proposed convention was intended to provide umbrella cover for situations not addressed by the existing sectoral conventions on terrorism, concluded under the auspices of the UN. The CCIT is described as the mother of all anti-terrorism conventions.
- In 1996 the U.N. General Assembly (UNGA) decided to establish an Ad Hoc Committee to develop a comprehensive legal framework of conventions dealing...
with international terrorism. But, the CCIT has not yet been adopted by the UNGA.

- In Prime Minister of India’s speech at the 69th session of the UNGA in 2014, he called upon all the countries to put aside their differences and adopt the CCIT.

**Significance of CCIT**

- CCIT intends to criminalize all forms of international terrorism and will provide a comprehensive mechanism to eliminate terrorism.

- It is a legal framework which would make it binding for all countries to cut off funds and deny arms and safe haven to terrorist organizations.

- It calls for agreement on a universal definition of terrorism which all the 193 members of the UNGA will have to adopt into their domestic criminal laws. It wants to do away with the distinction between ‘good terrorists’ and ‘bad terrorists’.

- CCIT will result into the ban of all terrorist groups irrespective of their objectives or country of operation and prosecute all terrorists including cross-border groups under special laws.

- It has the provision to amend domestic laws to make cross-border terrorism an extraditable offence.

**Opposition to CCIT**

- The draft has been deadlocked since 2012 over difference on defining terrorism and terrorists and the scope of the proposed convention.

- There was a deadlock on whether the convention would be applicable on armed forces of a state and to self determination or freedom movements.

- Many countries brand these terror camps as ‘liberation movements’ or ‘freedom fighters’ and try to exempt those whom they favor.

- There are three blocs which have so far opposed the convention- the USA, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the Latin American countries.

- The US fears that the CCIT will affect its own military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. But India has initiated the changes in the draft convention and clarified that “the activities of armed forces during an armed conflict” will not be covered by the convention.

- Latin American countries have reservations about international humanitarian laws and human rights being ignored.

- The OIC feels that the convention will be used to target Pakistan and will restrict
the rights of self determination groups in Palestine, Kashmir and elsewhere in the world.

Q. Comprehensive Convention for International Terrorism (CCIT) spearheaded by India will be a patent tool to combat global threat terrorism. Discuss.

5.5. Pravasi Bhartiya Divas (PBD) 2017

- 14th Pravasi Bhartiya Divas had been organized in Bengaluru from 7th to 9th January on the theme “Redefining Engagement with the India Diaspora”.
- The chief guest for this year was the Prime Minister of Portugal Mr. Antonio Costa.

Highlights of The Event

- The inaugural session was on the theme “Role of Diaspora Youth in the Transformation of India.”
- The Prime Minister of India emphasised upon deepening engagement with the Diaspora to reconnect them with their roots and enhance their awareness of both contemporary India and the culture and heritage of India.
- The session on “India Development Foundation of Overseas Indians: Diaspora contributing to India’s Social and Developments Efforts” aimed at facilitating philanthropy by Overseas Indians to social and development projects in India.
- There were also sessions on startups and innovations which have a social impact in India and startup ecosystem in India.
- The event exhibition showcased the achievements of the government in various sectors, including its policies and initiatives regarding Non Resident Indians.
- Delegates also explored business opportunities in India and can connect with government officials, business owners and entrepreneurs.
- It was decided that OCI cards will be issued to ‘Girmitiyas’ (The agreement between indentured Indians who left India for Mauritius, Fiji, Trinidad & Tobago, Suriname and then British government is known as ‘Girmit’)

Significance Of PBD

- These conventions provide a platform to overseas Indian community to engage with the govt and people of the land of their ancestors for mutually beneficial activities.
These conventions are very useful in networking among the overseas Indian community residing in various parts of the world and enable them to share their experiences in various fields.

One of the largest communities of expatriates amounting to about 31.7 millions, the Pravasi Bhartiya has ability to assimilate and yet maintain his identity. These conventions helped in appreciating their contribution to the adopted lands through their dedication and hard work.

This Convention does not only provide an interface between the government and the Indian Diaspora, but also provides an excellent opportunity for both the Government of India and the State Governments to showcase policies, initiatives and achievements in various sectors and invite the Diaspora to contribute and give back to the country of their origin.

The occasion highlights sectors in India that need the active support and engagement of Indian Diaspora. The Indian Diaspora may consider participation in programmes such as GIAN - Global Initiative of Academic Networks, under which they can visit India for short term academic assignments with institutions of higher learning including IITs and IIMs. They can also avail the fellowships and scholarship programmes offered by the Department of Science & Technology and Biotechnology to explore avenues for joint research and development.

Through such collaborations, our Institutions, Entrepreneurs and Innovators can enrich our education sector and skilling efforts.

About Pravasi Bhartiya Divas

- Pravasi Bharatiya Divas (PBD) is celebrated on 9 January every year to mark the contribution of Overseas Indian community in the development of India.

- January 9 was chosen as the day to celebrate this occasion since it was on this day in 1915 that Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest Pravasi, returned to India from South Africa.

- PBD conventions are being held every year since 2003.

- During the event, individuals of exceptional merit are honoured with the prestigious Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Award to appreciate their role in India’s growth. The event also provides a forum for discussing key issues concerning the Indian Diaspora.
Q. India’s Diaspora plays a crucial role in both formulation as well as implementation of India’s foreign policy objectives. In the light of recently held PravasiBhartiya Divas explain how important Indian Diaspora is for India’s foreign policy.

5.6. **INDIA-UAE**

**Why In News**

- The crown prince of Abu Dhabi and the deputy supreme commander of the UAE, Sheikh Mohammad Bin Zayed Al Nahyan had visited India as chief guest at the Republic Day of India.

- The visit not only bolsters New Delhi’s relations with the Gulf country but also aid India’s efforts to isolate Pakistan in the region over cross-border terror.

**Highlights of The Visit**

- India and UAE have signed two key bilateral agreements including one that aims to put together the framework to enhance investments in Indian infrastructure sector.

- **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement** has been signed during the visit to elevate their multifaceted ties to an even higher and qualitatively new level.

- **MOU on cooperation in prevention and combating of human trafficking** was signed during the visit as an important step forward in developing joint strategies to combat such threats.

- The two countries signed a pact under which UAE would supply fuel for the creation of a strategic oil reserve for India.

- Defence and security, space, civil nuclear energy as well as collaboration in information technology and information technology-enabled services are the new areas identified to take relations to the next level.

- It was decided that the Indian government will try to resolve legacy issues of UAE investors without diluting cases pending before courts without hurting the historic relation between the nations.

- The Prince was the third dignitary from the Gulf to be a Republic Day chief guest and this will reset ties with the country seen to be traditionally close to Pakistan.

- An agreement was signed between the sovereign investment fund of UAE and NIIF (National Investment and Infrastructure Fund).
India-UAE Relations

Background

- India and United Arab Emirates (UAE) enjoy strong bonds of friendship based on age-old cultural, religious and economic ties between the two nations.

- The relation though occasionally marred by UAE support for Pakistan (on the Kashmir issue) has greatly flourished especially after the accession of H. H. Sheikh Zayed Bin Sultan Al Nahyan, as the ruler of Abu Dhabi in 1966 and subsequently with the creation of UAE federation in 1971.

- Since then both sides have made sincere efforts to improve relations in all fields.

- It was after 24 years (Indira Gandhi in May 1981) that an Indian PM visited the country (President had visited in November 2010) in August 2015. This shows the renewed interest Indian foreign establishment is showing in the region as part of the Link West Policy.

- The relation has been elevated to the level of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership Agreement, outlining a roadmap for deepening co-operation

Political Relations

- India-UAE bilateral relations have received impetus from time-to-time with exchange of high-level visits from both sides.

- A Local Coordination and Grievance Redressal Mechanism to redress grievances of the Indian community is also in place in the form of a Local Coordination Committee (LCC).

Commercial Relations

- The relationship between the two countries has evolved into a significant partnership in the economic and commercial sphere with UAE emerging as the second largest market globally for Indian products.

- Indians have emerged as important investors within the UAE and India as an important export destination for the UAE manufactured goods.

- UAE was the second largest export destination of India for the year 2014-15. For UAE, India was the largest trading partner for the year 2013.

- Several joint working groups were set up to address issues of mutual interest in sectors including infrastructure, energy & investment.
Tourism sector is one of the areas that has good potential for future growth especially medical tourism. Emiratis going to India are already utilising Indian health services including the ayurvedic establishments and spas. Another area with considerable scope for cooperation in tourism is construction and maintenance of hotels.

Energy Security

- UAE contributes significantly to India’s energy security and is the fifth largest supplier of crude oil to India in 2015-16.
- The Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) and the Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd. (ISPRL) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of a Strategic Petroleum Reserve in India.

Security co-operation

- A significant aspect of bilateral ties is the closer convergence on security and counter-terrorism.
- Notwithstanding a security agreement in place since 2011 progress on counter-terrorism and maritime security had been slow.
- Recently in the joint statement two sides alluded to Pakistan calling upon all states to reject and abandon the use of terrorism against other countries, dismantle terrorism infrastructures and bring perpetrators of terrorism to justice.
- Further with the rise of Islamic State the need for co-operation in security areas and intelligence sharing has achieved higher moral ground.
- The joint production of defence equipment under the Make in India programme is another important area of focus.

Cultural Relations

- The two nations share historical ties and have maintained regular cultural exchanges both at official and popular levels.
- India and UAE signed a Cultural Agreement in 1975.
- Prominent events organized by the Culture Centre include handicraft bazar – Discover India, poetry reading session, a session on Indo-Arab Relations through the ages in History, Art & Culture with special emphasis on UAE, retrospective of Shyam Benegal’s film.
Indian Diaspora

- UAE is home to Indian expatriate community of more than 2.6 million – the largest expatriate community in the UAE.

- Indian community has played a major role in the economic development of the UAE.

- Professionally qualified personnel constitute about 15 & 20 percent of the community, followed by 20 percent white-collar nonprofessionals (clerical staff, shop assistants, sales men, accountants, etc) and the remainder 65% comprises blue-collar workers. There is a significant business community from India.

- With a large number of blue-collared Indian workers focus of bilateral relations is also on developing efficient grievance-redressal mechanisms for Indian workers in UAE.

- India and UAE signed a MoU in the field of Manpower Sourcing in December 2006 and a Protocol to streamline the admission of Indian contract workers by way of an electronic contract registration and validation system was signed on April 4, 2012.

- A comprehensive online web-based ‘NRI registration system’ has been developed for Indians resident in UAE to register them on the system by filling in the requested details.

- The Embassy has Indian Community Welfare Fund (ICWF) for providing short term economic assistance (food, shelter, passage expenses etc) to destitute workers/housemaids in distress.

- Indian Workers Resource Centre (IWRC) with a 24-hour helpline is operating in Dubai since November 2010.

Labour issues:

- According to Human Rights Watch and other international human rights organizations, the migrant laborers in UAE are facing several issues including exploitative working conditions, poor living accommodations, restrictions on freedom to organize or bargain collectively and nonpayment of salaries.

- Sexual abuse and violence are also reported regularly. For its part, the UAE government recognizes gaps in implementation of labor laws and other mandates.

- The UAE’s legal adjudication process has struggled to keep up with the large volume of labor complaints filed by migrants and employers.

- There are very few anti-discrimination laws in relation to labour issues with Emiratis being given preferential treatment when it comes to employment.
• The UAE’s Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs are working closely to evolve a new arrangement that would make the system of recruitment and contracting more transparent.

• India and UAE have decided to provide a proper grievance redressal mechanism to large number of Indian migrant labourer in UAE and help resolve the issue of Indian migrants.

Kafala System

• The system requires all unskilled laborers to have an in-country sponsor usually their employer who is responsible for their visa and legal status.

• The migrant workers’ visas are tied to the employers so that they cannot change jobs without the consent of their employers.

• This practice has been criticised by human rights organizations for creating easy opportunities for the exploitation of workers, as many employers take away passports and abuse their workers with little chance of legal repercussions.

• The system is prevalent in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, and UAE.
6. SUMMITS AND ORGANISATION

6.1. World Economic Forum (WEF) Summit

Why In News

- The annual meeting of WEF had been organized in Davos, Switzerland. It is the premier event for world leaders to shape global, regional and industry agendas.
- The theme of this year’s meeting is “Responsive and Responsible Leadership”.

Key Highlights Of Summit

- The summit was focused upon **five key areas**: strengthening global collaboration, restoring economic growth, reforming capitalism, addressing the identity crisis which has caused the current populist revolution, and preparing for the Fourth Industrial Revolution.

- A new fund backed by the Norwegian government has been launched that will raise $400 million and provide financial assistance to the countries working to reduce deforestation and forest and peat degradation. It would promote deforestation-free agricultural investment and is being developed under Tropical Forest Alliance, a public-private partnership.

- The **Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI)** was officially launched at the Annual Meeting with the aim of quickly reacting to epidemics by creating vaccines that could be released quickly once an outbreak occurs.

- Signatories to the Forum’s New Vision for Arab Employment project are helping to re-skill 250,000 people since 2013 and are now targeting 1 million current and future workers.

- The Forum teamed with the University of California Santa Barbara’s Marine Science Institute to build a coalition to protect the world’s oceans and marine resources. It is a part of Forum’s New Vision For The Ocean Initiative and is a step forward to achieve the goal number 14 of SDG (to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development).

- The Forum mobilized a public-private coalition to build a responsible, inclusive and sustainable battery supply chain.

- 40 governments and businesses including some of world’s largest consumer goods retailers and recycling firms endorsed a plan to increase global reuse and recycling rates for plastic packaging from its current 14% to 70%. The plan is part of the New Plastics Economy: Catalysing Action Report which was started in 2016.
The world’s largest financial service providers, global IT and telecom companies and the international humanitarian community agreed on to better enabling of digital cash payments in crisis-affected populations. Digital cash has a proven track record of fostering entrepreneurialism and boosting local economies.

*The Compact for Responsive and Responsible Leadership* has been developed with the International Business Council (IBC). IBC will now develop a framework which will allow the measurement of a long-term approach for businesses.

**The Objectives Of Davos 2017**

- To improve global governance through public-private cooperation by working in close collaboration with key international organizations and providing substantial input into major multilateral processes.
- To convene public and private-sector leaders together with defence, intelligence and public safety experts to prepare for and respond to a rapidly changing security landscape and multiple humanitarian crises.
- To support multi-stakeholder efforts to deliver sustainable and inclusive economic development in the time of slowing growth rates, declining productivity and disruptive innovations.
- To examine in depth the social and economic transformations occurring in all regions of the world through informal interaction with over 250 political leaders on trade and investment-related issues in various national and regional contexts.
- To shape the evolution of industry ecosystems and business models particularly in the context of the Fourth Industrial Revolution by engaging industry leaders with their peers from government to better prepare for the future.
- To share ideas, innovations and discoveries that will reshape global systems by engaging those at the vanguard of change from fields such as the arts, media, medicine, science and technology as well as the next generation of future leaders.

**World Economic Forum**

- The World Economic Forum is the International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation committed to improving the state of the world.
- The Forum engages the foremost political, business and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.
- It was established in 1971 as a not-for-profit foundation and is headquartered in
• Various reports published by WEF are:
  o Global Competitiveness Report
  o Global Risk Report
  o Global Information Technology Report
  o Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Report
  o Global Gender Gap Report

6.2. **Human Rights Watch World Report 2017**

The civil society organization Human Rights Watch has released the World Report 2017- *Demagogues Threaten Human Rights*. The report summarizes key human rights issue in more than 90 countries and territories worldwide.

**Key Human Rights Issues In India As Highlighted In The Report**

- The issue of **freedom of speech** has been identified in the report as an increasing concern for the country. According to the report in India there are limits on free speech and **attacks on religious minorities** often led by vigilante groups.

- **AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Purpose Act)** is an act which is misused and results in violating human rights. Impunity for police and security forces largely continued amid new allegations of torture and extrajudicial killings including reports of sexual assault and other abuses by security forces in many states.

- **Security Forces Abuses and Lack of Accountability** -- Indian law makes it difficult, if not impossible to prosecute public officials. The report highlighted **section 197 of the CrPC** which bars courts from recognizing any offenses (except sexual offenses) alleged to have been committed by public servants in the discharge of their official duties unless the central or a state government permits prosecution.

- **Treatment of Dalits** – Atrocities against tribal groups and religious minorities is also a rising issue. Vigilante groups have attacked minority groups and Dalits over suspicions that they had killed, stolen or sold cows for beef.

- According to the report **Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)** which regulates foreign funding for civil society organizations has weaknesses and is
vulnerable to misuse. It can be misused to cut off funds and control the activities of organizations that question or criticize the government.

- **Women’s Rights** -- Despite some high-profile rape and sexual assault prosecutions, new reports of gang rapes, domestic violence, acid attacks and murders of women in 2016 highlighted the need for concerted government action to improve women’s safety and ensure prompt police investigation of such crimes. Women and girls with disabilities in particular continue to face barriers to accessing justice for violence against them.

- **Children’s Rights** -- In report the new Juvenile Justice Act came into force permitting prosecution of 16 and 17 year olds in adult court when charged with serious crimes such as rape and murder has been highlighted. The law was enacted despite strong opposition from children’s rights activists and the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights.

- **Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity** -- In February 2016, the Supreme Court of India allowed a challenge to section 377 of the penal code to proceed referring the case to a five-judge bench. The colonial-era provision which the court had upheld in 2013 criminalizes same-sex relations between adults.

- The government introduced a new bill in parliament on the **rights of transgender persons**. The report alleged that bill has several provisions which are inconsistent with the law and Supreme court decisions in past.

- **Rights of People with Disabilities** -- The report revealed the range of abuses that disabled women face in the country. Women and girls with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities in India continue to be locked up in overcrowded and unsanitary state mental hospitals and residential institutions without their consent due to stigma and the absence of adequate community-based support and mental health services. In this regard India’s Upper House of Parliament has passed a new mental health bill in August 2016.

- **Death Penalty** -- According to the report Indian courts have recognized that the death penalty has been imposed disproportionately and in a discriminatory manner against disadvantaged groups in India. There were no executions in 2016 but some 385 prisoners remained on death row. Most of the prisoners belong to marginalized communities or religious minorities.

- The report also highlighted the deteriorated Foreign Policy Relations between India and Pakistan in 2016. Following the outbreak of renewed **violation in Jammu and**
Kashmir in, the government of Pakistan called on the UN secretary-general for an independent inquiry and plebiscite under UN supervision.

- The report appreciated the steps taken by the government for the financial inclusion of the marginalized which will not only help eradicate poverty but will also ensure participation of the marginalized in the formal economy.
- Government of India’s massive sanitation drive was lauded in the report for the objectives it set to achieve and the progress made so far. Poor sanitation results in high disease incidence and high morbidity. Out of pocket health expenditure is one of the largest causes of poverty. Improved sanitation will result in healthier lives and is also set to lower down the out of pocket expenditure on health issues.

**Global Efforts To Protect Human Rights**

- Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings whatever the nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, or language.
- The first concrete step to protect human rights was taken by the U.N. General Assembly in December, 1948 by adopting the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*.
- The Universal Declaration was not a legally binding Covenant and had no machinery for its enforcement hence in December, 1966 two Covenants for the observance of human rights are adopted by U.N. General Assembly:
  - The Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
- *European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights* was adopted in 1950. This Convention is legally binding on those States who have ratified it. After ratification it came into force in 1953.
- In December 1993, Assembly established the post of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in order to promote and protect the effective enjoyment of all civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights by all.

**National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)**

- The NHRC is an autonomous statutory body established in 1993 according to the provisions of the Protection of Human Rights Act.
- The Commission is composed of a chairperson and six members. The chairperson has to have been a retired chief justice of the Supreme Court.
- The purpose of the NHRC is suo moto or through the petition of a person to investigate the violation of human rights or the failures of the state or other to prevent a human rights violation.

- The Commission can visit state institutions where people are detained such as jails to examine the conditions of the institutions and make sure they are in compliance with human rights provisions.

- They can also examine any law or constitutional provisions to ensure that the safeguards of the law protect human rights.

- They are to advise the state on measures to prevent terrorism and related violations as well as on how to effectively implement provisions of human rights treaties.

- The commissions may also take on research about human rights, create awareness campaigns through various mediums and encourage the work of NGOs.

### About Human Rights Watch

- Human Rights Watch is a nonprofit, non-governmental human rights organization having its presence around the globe.

- It is established in 1978 and known for its accurate fact-finding, impartial reporting, effective use of media and targeted advocacy often in partnership with local human rights groups.

- Their work is guided by international human rights and humanitarian law and respect for the dignity of each human being.

- Human Rights Watch meets and collaborate with governments, the United Nations, regional groups like the African Union and the European Union, financial institutions and corporations to press for changes in policy and practice that promote human rights and justice around the world.

### 6.3. Paris Peace Conference

On January 15, 2017 representatives from nations across the globe gathered in Paris for a conference on peace in the Middle East which resulted into a Joint declaration to resolve the conflict.
Reasons For Middle East Peace Initiative

- The conflict between Israel and the Palestine territories is getting worse in the absence of prospects for negotiations hence a comprehensive dialogue over the issue is needed.

- Growing threats are weighing on the two-State solution particularly the continuation of settlement-building and security problems.

- The region (Syria, Iraq, Yemen etc.) is engulfed in a crisis and is already facing various challenges such as terrorism, migrant crisis and political instability.

- It is the responsibility of the world leaders to create political momentum conducive to new negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians themselves.

Highlights Of The Conference

- It was reaffirmed that a negotiated solution with two states, Israel and Palestine living side by side in peace and security is the only way to achieve enduring peace.

- It was reiterated that a negotiated two-state solution should meet the legitimate aspirations of both sides including the Palestinian’s right to statehood and sovereignty and satisfy Israel's security needs and resolve all permanent status issues on the basis of United Nations Security Council resolutions.

- The Arab Peace Initiative of 2002 is a comprehensive framework for the resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict thus contributing to regional peace and security and hence it was reaffirmed that this should be made the basis of any future solution.

- It was felt that international efforts to advance Middle East peace including the adoption of United Nations Security Council resolution which clearly condemned settlement activity, incitement and all acts of violence and terror is a must for any meaningful solution.

- It was decided in the conference that each side should independently demonstrate through policies and actions a genuine commitment to the two-state solution and refrain from unilateral steps that prejudge the outcome of negotiations on final status issues including Jerusalem, Gaza Strip, West Bank, Settlements, borders, security and refugees.

- The world leaders agreed on a Joint Declaration which reaffirmed the two state solution though U.K. refused to sign the declaration arguing that it will further make the negotiation process difficult.
• Closer cooperation was reaffirmed between the Middle East Quartet (the EU, the UN, the United States and Russia) and Arab League members and other relevant actors to further the objectives of the joint Declaration.

**Middle East Quartet**

- The Middle East Quartet consists of the United Nations, the European Union, the United States and Russia.
- It was set up in 2002 to help mediate Middle East peace negotiations and to support Palestinian economic development and institution-building in preparation for eventual statehood.

6.4. **ILO Released World Employment And Social Outlook**

**Why In News**

- The International Labour Organisation has released a *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2017* report.
- The report has focused upon the current global labour market situation, assessing the most recent employment developments and forecasting unemployment levels in developed, emerging and developing countries.

**Highlights Of The Report**

- The report revealed that the economic growth continues to disappoint and deficits in decent work remain widespread. The global economic growth is expected to pick up modestly in 2017 (3.4 per cent) and 2018 (3.6 per cent).
- The disappointing economic performance in 2016 and the below-trend outlook for 2017 raise concerns about the ability of the economy to (i) generate a sufficient number of jobs (ii) improve the quality of employment for those with a job (iii) ensure that the gains of growth are shared in an inclusive manner.
- The report highlighted the twin challenges which the countries around the globe are facing -- of repairing the damage caused by the crisis and creating quality employment opportunities for new labour market entrants.
- According to the report the global unemployment is expected to rise by 3.4 million in 2017 as the global labour force continues to grow.
- The report has estimated the vulnerable employment at 1.4 billion worldwide. Workers in vulnerable forms of employment are typically subject to high levels of
precariousness e.g. they often have limited access to contributory social protection schemes which tend to be more common among wage and salaried workers.

- According to the report reductions in working poverty are slowing, endangering the prospects for eradicating poverty as set out in the Sustainable Development Goals. In emerging and developing countries, the share of workers living in moderate or extreme poverty is expected to fall from 29.4 per cent in 2016 to 28.7 per cent in 2017. However progress in reducing working poverty rates is slowing.

- The ILO’s social unrest index which seeks to represent the expressed discontent with the socio-economic situation in countries indicates that average global social unrest increased between 2015 and 2016. Discontent with the social situation and lack of decent job opportunities are the factors that play a role in a person’s decision to migrate.

- It urges to formulate policies that address both the root causes of stagnation and structural hurdles to growth need to be incorporated into macroeconomic policies and placed at the forefront of the policy agenda.

- The ILO estimates that a coordinated effort to provide fiscal stimulus (an increase in public investment) that takes into account each country’s fiscal space would provide an immediate jump-start to the global economy.
7. DEFENCE AND SECURITY

7.1. **INS Khanderi**

- India’s second Scorpene class submarine, INS Khanderi has been launched at the Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in Mumbai.
- INS Khanderi is built by Mazagaon Dock Limited under a transfer-of-technology agreement with the French naval defence group DCNS.
- Khanderi’s construction is based on the French DCNS designed Scorpene-class diesel-electric submarines which are capable of neutralizing surface, sub-surface and strategic ground-based targets without being detected by enemy.
- Khanderi is named after the Island fort of Maratha forces which played a vital role in ensuring their supremacy at sea in the late 17th century.

**Features**

- The state-of-the-art features include superior stealth and the ability to launch a crippling attack on the enemy using precision guided weapons.
- **Warfare:** The submarine can launch torpedos and tube-launch missiles against land, sea and underwater targets.
- **Underwater capability:** The ‘air independent propulsion system’ technology of the diesel-powered Scorpene submarines will allow them to remain underwater for longer periods.
- Equipped with the hybrid propulsion package the submarine can effectively operate with zero noise levels. Operating in ultra-quiet mode the submarines can tail high value targets such as hostile aircraft carriers and missile cruisers in any hostile environment.
- Submarines powered by diesel and electric engines usually operate in territorial waters and can prove to be force multipliers in littoral and tropic waters. These submarines are stealthier and silent than nuclear powered submarines.

**Strategic Importance**

- Scorpene submarines are one of the most advanced combatants in their class and are currently in service with Chilean and Malaysian navy only and this uniqueness makes them standout from the rest.
- The stealth features are expected to give the submarine invulnerability, unmatched by many submarines.
• The ability to launch a crippling attack on the enemy using precision guided weapons makes them a potent warhead for the navy.

• **INS Khanderi** is designed to operate in all theatres including the tropics. All means and communications are provided to ensure interoperability with other components of a Naval Task Force.

• INS Khanderi can undertake diverse types of missions including anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, intelligence gathering, mine laying, area surveillance and strategic shore based targets destruction among others.

7.2. **New Army And Air Force Chief Appointed**

**Why In News**

• General Bipin Rawat was appointed as the new Chief of the Army Staff after General Dalbir Singh, ignoring the seniority of Lt. Gen. Praveen Bakshi and Lt. Gen. P.M. Hariz.

• Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa took over as the 25th Chief of the Air Staff. He succeeded Arup Raha who retired from the service.

• The two Service Chiefs retiring together was unique because it would have implied Admiral Sunil Lamba present Naval Chief will continue as the Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) till he serves, if the government does not appoint a Permanent Chairman COSC (PC COSC) or a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) in the interim.

**Chief of Defence Staff**

• During the British era, India was perhaps the only country in the world which had a single Commander-in-Chief for all the three Services.

• In 1947 this arrangement was discarded and each Service came to have its own Commander-in-Chief independent of each other.

• A Chief of Defence Staff was proposed after the 1999 Kargil War by the Kargil Review Committee (KRC) and endorsed by a group of ministers headed by then home minister L.K. Advani.

• Subsequently the **Naresh Chandra committee** was set up to suggest reforms in higher defense management; it also underscored the importance of a CDS.

• The CDS model envisages for a close degree of coordination and synergy among
the tri services by appointing a person who would be the head of military
operations and the most senior advisor to the government on all matters related
to the military.

- The CDS will be mandated for the coordination of cyber and space functions,
rationalizing the capabilities of individual services and plans and procurements for
force development which consider fiscal resources and optimization of logistics.

**Need**

- The three Armed Forces function largely as separate executive entities without
adequate coordination. Though the Integrated Defense Staff Headquarters (HQ
IDS) was set up in 2001 based on the GOM (Group of Ministers)
recommendations but it is not fulfilling the desired objectives.

- In the absence of the Chief of Defence Staff, IDS’s head have no effective powers
to coordinate the functioning of the three services as a cumulative and integrated
structure.

- India’s strategic weaknesses that have emerged in the wars since 1947 centre
on lack of war preparedness, poor intelligence and crippling processing of defence
requirements signifies the urgent need of the coordinating agency.

- All policy and coordination functions are carried out by the Ministry of Defense
(MOD).

- Policy-making on operations, procurement and joint logistics proposals therefore
either gets delayed or stuck without justification and accountability in the absence
of expertise. This is worrying as the security environment in India’s neighborhood
is rapidly deteriorating.

- CDS is needed to correct the anomaly of civic-military interface during the
shaping/deterrence phase, during operations or after the occurrence of unsavory
situations.

- The existing CoSC comprises the Army, Navy and IAF chiefs, with the senior-
most of them acting as the “rotational” chairman till he retires. It is inadequate
Since:
  - He has dual role as he is also the Chief of his own service. Combined
    responsibility often results in neglect and delay.
  - At times, it can also place two roles in conflict. Coming from a particular service
    might affect his neutrality and he might favour the particular service overlooking
the concerns of other two services.

- This gives very less tenure to them as the Chairman. It affects the overall policymaking process.

- Appointing either the CDS or Permanent Chairman COSC would separate the two roles and bring the requisite professional focus to each.

- It will strategize robust national defence policy, synergised and calibrated tri-service contingency planning and capital acquisition plan. Hence jointmanship within the forces would result in optimum utilisation of resources.

Arguments against CDS:

- It is said that adequate coordination is being carried out by the existing Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) and this has successfully met our Defence requirements for the last sixty years. Therefore, the present arrangement should not be disturbed.

- The CDS model has been opposed by the civilian bureaucracy as this will undermine and diminish their dominance and stranglehold over the higher defence set up.

- It is the feeling among the defence services particularly the Air Force that in case of establishing CDS Army will dominate in defence policy formulation.

- There are also the inhibitions in serving Service chiefs that their position would get undermined if the CDS were to be appointed.

Q. Chief of Defence Staff is required to provide holistic management of national security. Critically Analyse.

7.3. ED Launched Money Laundering Cases

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has launched over 400 inquiries and registered 22 cases of money laundering against bank officials, businessmen and middlemen in connection with the allegations of illegal exchange of demonetised notes.

What is Money Laundering

- Money laundering is a process where the proceeds of crime are transformed into apparently legitimate money or other assets. It is the processing of criminal proceeds to disguise its illegal origin. In simple words, it can be defined as the act of making money that comes from one source to look like it comes from another source.
The most common types of criminals who need to launder money are drug traffickers, embezzlers, corrupt politicians and public officials, mobsters, terrorists and con artists.

The objective of criminalizing money laundering is to take profit out of the crime. The rationale for the creation of the offence is that it is wrong for individuals and organisations to assist criminals to benefit from the proceeds of their criminal activity or to facilitate the commission of such crimes by providing financial services to them.

Process Of Money Laundering

Money laundering is a single process however its cycle can be broken down into three distinct stages namely -- placement stage, layering stage and integration stage.

Placement Stage: It is the stage at which criminally derived funds are introduced in the financial system. At this stage, the launderer inserts the “dirty” money into a legitimate financial institution often in the form of cash bank deposits. This is the riskiest stage of the laundering process because large amounts of cash are pretty conspicuous and banks are required to report high-value transactions.

Layering Stage: It is the stage at which complex financial transactions are carried out in order to camouflage the illegal source. At this stage the launderer engages in a series of conversions or movements of the money in order to distant them from their source. In other words, the money is sent through various financial transactions so as to change its form and make it difficult to follow.

Integration stage: It is the final stage at which the ‘laundered’ property is re-introduced into the legitimate economy. At this stage, the launderer might choose to invest the funds into real estate, luxury assets or business ventures. At this point the launderer can use the money without getting caught.

Various Measures Adopted For Money Laundering

Structuring Deposits: This is also known as smurfing, this is a method of placement whereby cash is broken into smaller deposits of money used to defeat suspicion of money laundering and avoid anti-money laundering reporting requirements.

Shell companies: These are fake companies that exist for no other reason than to launder money. They take in dirty money as "payment" for supposed goods or services but actually provide no goods or services; they simply create the appearance of legitimate transactions through fake invoices and balance sheets.

Third-Party Cheques: Counter cheques or banker’s drafts drawn on different institutions are utilized and cleared via various third-party accounts. Third party
cheques and traveler’s cheques are often purchased using proceeds of crime. Since these are negotiable in many countries, the nexus with the source money is difficult to establish.

- **Bulk cash smuggling:** This involves physically smuggling cash to another jurisdiction and depositing it in a financial institution such as an offshore bank with greater bank secrecy or less rigorous money laundering enforcement.

### Threats Of Money Laundering To Internal Security

- Criminal activity produces funds and other proceeds that will be laundered by money laundering activities by entering them into the financial system without detection.
- Several large-scale illegal activities such as arms dealing, organized crime, terrorist financing as well as drug and sex trafficking not only finance by money laundering but also promoted these activities.
- Money laundering brings potential damage to reputation of financial institutions and market.
- It weakens the “democratic institutions” of the society.
- The activities of money laundering destabilises economy of the country causing financial crisis.
- Policy distortion occurs because of measurement error and misallocation of resources.
- Discourages foreign investors.
- Causes financial crisis.
- Encourages tax evasion culture
- Results in exchange and interest rates volatility.

### Prevention Of Money Laundering – Global Initiatives

Money laundering is an international phenomenon hence transnational co-operation is of critical importance in the fight against this menace.

- **The Vienna Convention**
  - It was the first major initiative in the prevention of money laundering held in December 1988.
This convention laid down the groundwork for efforts to combat money laundering by obliging the member states to criminalize the laundering of money from drug trafficking.

The convention also establishes the principle that domestic bank secrecy provisions should not interfere with international criminal investigations.

**The Council of Europe Convention**

- This convention in 1990 establishes a common policy on money laundering. It sets out a common definition of money laundering and common measures for dealing with it.
- The Convention lays down the principles for international cooperation among the member states which may also include states outside the Council of Europe.

**Basle Committee’s Statement of Principles**

In December 1988, the Basle Committee on Banking Regulations and Supervisory Practices issued a statement of principles which aims at encouraging the banking sector to adopt common position in order to ensure that banks are not used to hide or launder funds acquired through criminal activities.

**The Financial Action Task Force (FATF)**

- The FATF is an inter-governmental body established at the G7 summit at Paris in 1989 with the objective to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures to combat money laundering and terrorist financing and other related threats to integrity of the international financial system.
- The FATF has developed a series of recommendations that are recognised as the international standards for combating money laundering and the financing of terrorism. They form a basis for a co-ordinated response to these threats to the integrity of the financial system and help ensure a level playing field.

**United Nations Global Programme Against Money Laundering**

- GPML was established in 1997 with a view to increase effectiveness of international action against money laundering through comprehensive technical cooperation services offered to Governments.
- The programme encompasses following 3 areas of activities:
  - Technical cooperation is the main task of the Programme. It encompasses activities of creating awareness, institution building and training.
The research and analysis aims at offering States Key Information to better understand the phenomenon of money laundering and to enable the international community to devise more efficient and effective countermeasure strategies.

The commitment to support the establishment of financial investigation services for raising the overall effectiveness of law enforcement measures.

**Prevention Of Money Laundering in India**

In India, before the enactment of Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) the major statutes that incorporated measures to address the problem of money laundering were:

- The Income Tax Act, 1961
- The Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act, 1974 (COFEPOSA)
- The Smugglers and Foreign Exchange Manipulators Act, 1976 (SAFEMA) → The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 (NDPSA)
- The Benami Transactions (Prohibition) Act, 1988
- The Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1988
- The Foreign Exchange Management Act, 2000, (FEMA)

Banks were advised to follow certain customer identification procedure for opening of accounts and monitoring transactions of a suspicious nature for the purpose of reporting it to appropriate authority.

These KYC guidelines have been revisited in the context of the Recommendations made by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on Anti-Money Laundering (AML) standards and on Combating Financing of Terrorism (CFT).

Banks should keep in mind that the information collected from the customer for the purpose of opening of account is to be treated as confidential and details thereof are not to be divulged for cross selling or any other like purposes.
Institutional Framework For Prevention Of Money Laundering

The Financial Intelligence Unit - India (FIU-Ind)

- The Financial Intelligence Unit - India (FIUIND) is the nodal agency in India for managing the Anti-Money Laundering ecosystem and has significantly helped in coordinating and strengthening efforts of national and international intelligence, investigation and enforcement agencies in pursuing the global efforts against money laundering and related crimes.

- This is a specialized government agency established to act as an interface between financial sector and law enforcement agencies for collecting, analysing and disseminating information, particularly about suspicious financial transactions.

Enforcement Directorate (ED)

- Directorate of Enforcement is a specialized financial investigation agency under the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance, Government of India, which enforces the following laws:

  - Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA) - A Civil Law with officers empowered to conduct investigations into suspected contraventions of the Foreign Exchange Laws and Regulations, adjudicate, contraventions and impose penalties on those adjudged to have contravened the law.

  - Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) - A Criminal Law with the officers empowered to conduct investigations to trace assets derived out of the proceeds of crime to provisionally attach/ confiscate the same and to arrest and prosecute the offenders found to be involved in Money Laundering.

- The Directorate of Enforcement was established in the year 1956 with its Headquarters at New Delhi.

7.4. India-France Sign ‘White Shipping Agreement’

Why In News

- India and France have signed an agreement for sharing information regarding maritime traffic to enhance maritime domain awareness in the Indian Ocean Region.

- The White Shipping Agreement will enable Navies of India and France to coordinate their roles in stabilising Indo-Pacific region. It will enhance Indo-French maritime security cooperation in the region.
Indo-France Maritime Cooperation

- India and France firmed up cooperation on sharing of radars in the Indian Ocean during Prime Minister of India’s visit to Paris in 2015.

- India is setting up a grid of coastal surveillance radars in the IOR that will enable it to monitor increasing Chinese presence in the area. France has shown interest in sharing data from surveillance systems on its Indian Ocean territories in the region that includes Mayotte (Mayotte is an archipelago in Indian Ocean between Madagascar and coast of Mozambique) besides military bases in UAE and Djibouti.

- India’s coastal surveillance radars have been set up in Sri Lanka (6), Mauritius (8) and Seychelles (1) as well as in Maldives. Both India and France in the last couple of years are coordinating their naval movements and surveillance in the IOR. France retains interests and assets with territories like Reunion Islands (Reunion Island is a French island located in the Indian Ocean in the east of Madagascar) in the IOR.

- The Indo-French dialogue emphasised on Freedom of Navigation in IOR and Pacific in the backdrop of China’s territorial claims and dominance in South China Sea.

What is White Shipping Agreement (WSA)

- The WSA establishes an information network protocol that allows the navies of both countries to exchange information about ships in their oceanic territories.

- Ships would be classified into white (commercial ships), grey (military vessels), and black (illegal vessels). White shipping information refers to exchange of relevant advance information on the identity and movement of commercial non-military merchant vessels.

- The seas of the entire world are inter-linked and vessels can sail routinely around the globe in pursuit of cargo. Having advance information of the vessel, its destination and planned itinerary etc. is thus extremely helpful towards collating an effective Maritime Domain Awareness.

- Being aware of the identity of these vessels is imperative to prevent any potential threat from the sea from impinging on the coastal and offshore security of the country. Indian Navy has thus been working towards achieving complete Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) along with all other concerned agencies like the coast guard, customs, ports, fisheries, etc.

- The information is equally relevant for the destination country and those it passes enroute. Thus mutual exchange of such information is known as white shipping information which is extremely useful for all concerned.
8. SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

8.1. Omega-3 Fatty acid

A research published in the New England Journal of Medicine, found women who were prescribed 2.4 grams of long-chain omega-3 supplements during the third trimester of pregnancy reduced their children’s risk of asthma by 31 per cent.

Fatty Acids

- A fatty acid is a carboxylic acid with a long aliphatic chain, which is either saturated or unsaturated.
- They are important for all systems of the body to function normally.
- The two essential fatty acids that the human body cannot produce are: omega-3 fatty acid and omega-6 fatty acids.

What Are They

- This is a family of essential fatty acids (cannot be manufactured by the body) that play important roles in the human body.
- Omega-3 fatty acids are polyunsaturated, meaning that they have several double bonds in the chemical structure.
- The three most important types are:
  - ALA (alpha-linolenic acid)
  - DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) and
  - EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid).
- ALA is mainly found in plants, while DHA and EPA are mainly found in animal foods and algae.
- They are found in fish oils, especially from salmon and other cold-water fish.
- Health benefit:
  - Affects child’s learning and behaviour.
  - Lower risk of heart attack.
  - Some research suggests that omega-3s may help protect against Alzheimer’s disease and dementia.
8.2. **JCVI Syn-3.0**

- It is the First Self-Replicating, Synthetic Bacterial Cell Constructed by J. Craig Venter Institute Researchers.
- This contains just 473 genes, making it the smallest genome of any organism that can be grown in laboratory media.
- The research to construct the first minimal synthetic cell at JCVI was the culmination of 20 years of research that began in 1995 after the genome sequencing of the first free-living organism.
- **Species chosen for research:** Mycoplasma genitalium was chosen as it was the species with the smallest number of genes known at the time when research began. This species is characterised by the lack of a cell wall. It is one of the smallest genomes of free-living organisms.

8.3. **Blister Packaging**

- It is a term for several types of pre-formed plastic packaging used for small consumer goods, foods, and for pharmaceuticals.
- Blister packs are useful for protecting products against external factors, such as humidity and contamination for extended periods of time. Opaque blisters also protect light-sensitive products against UV rays.

8.4. **GUaRDIAN( Genomics for Understanding Rare Disease, India Alliance Network) project**

- It originated primarily as a research collaboration involving basic scientists and clinicians who got together to explore potential translational applications of genomic technologies.
- It is a large-scale collaborative network of clinicians from around India trying to use genomics in clinical practice.
- It aims at using cutting-edge genomics technology to enable identification of genetic variations in diseases and enable clinicians arrive at precise diagnosis for rare genetic disease.
- Project is funded by CSIR
8.5. **Mesentery: A New Human Organ In The Digestive System**

- A new human organ that has existed in the digestive system for hundreds of years, has recently discovered by Irish scientists.
- Previously it was thought to be just a few fragmented structures in the digestive system.
- This organ connects the intestine to the abdomen.
- It is a fold of the peritoneum which attaches the stomach, small intestine, pancreas, spleen, and other organs to the posterior wall of the abdomen.
- Significance of Discovery: Better understanding and further scientific study of the mesentery could lead to less invasive surgeries, fewer complications, faster patient recovery and lower overall costs.


- It will be Israel’s largest renewable energy project when completed by 2018.
- It is located in the Negev desert.
- It is significant for Israel's commitment to CO2 reduction and renewable energy.
- Israel has set a goal of generating 10 percent of its energy from renewable sources by 2020, up from the current 2.5 per cent.
- The centerpiece of Ashalim project is a solar tower that will use solar energy to generate electricity.
How Is This Different From Other Solar Energy Plants

- Regular solar power plants use photovoltaic solar panels, which convert sunlight directly into electricity.
- But Solar towers use a different solar-thermal method.
- This Ashalim tower is encircled by 50,000 mirrors, known as heliostats.
- These mirrors focus the sun’s rays onto the tower, heating a boiler that creates steam to spin a turbine and generate electricity.

8.7. Hyperloop

- Recently, the government has referred the proposal to set up a hyperloop transportation system in the country to NITI Aayog.
- **Hyperloop transportation system** is a proposed mode of passenger and freight transportation that propels a pod-like vehicle through a near-vacuum tube at more than airline speed.
- The concept of high-speed travel in tubes has been around for decades. However, due to lack of technology could not be tested. Concept was reintroduced by billionaire inventor Elon Musk, CEO the aerospace firm SpaceX.
- Musk’s Hyperloop consists of two massive tubes stretching between urban cities. Pods carrying passengers would travel through the tubes at speeds topping out over 700 mph.

8.8. Mission Lucy and Psyche

NASA has selected two missions that have the potential to open new windows on one of the earliest eras in the history of our solar system – a time less than 10 million years after the birth of our sun. The missions, known as Lucy and Psyche.

**Lucy Mission**

- Lucy will visit a target-rich environment of Jupiter’s mysterious Trojan asteroids
- Lucy, a robotic spacecraft, is scheduled to launch in October 2021
- Lucy will build on the success of NASA’s New Horizons mission to Pluto and the Kuiper Belt

**Psyche Mission**

- Psyche will study a unique metal asteroid that’s never been visited before
The Psyche mission will explore one of the most intriguing targets in the main asteroid belt – a giant metal asteroid, known as 16 Psyche, about three times farther away from the sun than is the Earth.

This asteroid measures about 130 miles (210 kilometers) in diameter and, unlike most other asteroids that are rocky or icy bodies, is thought to be comprised mostly of metallic iron and nickel, similar to Earth’s core.

8.9. **Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope**

The researchers have found what happens when matter ejected by a giant black hole is swept up in the merger of two enormous galaxy clusters using the data from NASA’s Chandra X-ray Observatory, India’s Giant Metrewave Radio Telescope (GMRT) and other telescopes.

**About GMRT**
- GMRT is an indigenous project set up by NCRA (National Centre for Radio Astrophysics), Pune.
- GMRT is a very versatile instrument for investigating a variety of radio astrophysical problems, ranging from nearby Solar system to the edge of observable Universe.
- Its important astrophysical objectives are:
  - To provide important constraints to the theories of formation of galaxies and clusters.
  - To search for and study rapidly-rotating Pulsars in our galaxy.

8.10. **Bedaquiline**

- Bedaquiline is the active substance in a TB drug which is also sometimes known by the trade name of Sirturo.
- Bedaquiline has only been approved for use in patients who have MDR-TB and when options to treat this condition using existing drugs have been exhausted.
- The drug is to be given in addition to the multidrug treatment regimen recommended by WHO.
- **How it works:** Bedaquiline works by blocking an enzyme inside the Mycobacterium tuberculosis bacteria called ATP synthase. This enzyme is used by the bacteria to generate energy. Without the ability to generate energy, the TB bacteria die and the patient’s condition can start to improve.
• **Side effects of this**: Headache, dizziness, feeling sick, being sick, joint pain and increases in liver enzymes.

8.11. **3D Graphene**

MIT researchers have found a way to print graphene as a porous 3D material that has five percent of the density of steel while being ten times stronger.

**Significance Of This Research**

• Although Graphene is one of the strongest materials known to man, but so far it hasn't lent itself to practical use because it is extremely thin.

• Creation of the new porous, 3D form had less to do with the material itself and more to do with the unusual geometric configuration employed. This could lead to lighter, stronger materials with similar geometric features.

**Graphene**

• It is an allotrope of carbon in the form of a two-dimensional, atomic-scale.

• **Properties of Graphene**:
  
  o It is ultra-light yet immensely tough.
  
  o It is 200 times stronger than steel, but it is incredibly flexible.
  
  o It is the thinnest material possible as well as being transparent.
  
  o It is a superb conductor and can act as a perfect barrier - not even helium can pass through it.

8.12. **Highest Altitude Telescopes by China**

• China is setting up the world’s highest altitude gravitational wave telescopes in a Tibet prefecture close to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) with India.

• The code name for the first phase telescope is Ngari No. 1 and is located 30 km south of Shiquanhe Town in Ngari Prefecture.

• Ngari No. 1 telescope will be located 5,250 meters above sea level.

• The second phase involves a series of telescopes, code-named Ngari No. 2, to be located about 6,000 meters above sea level.

• Telescopes is designed to set up and detect the faintest echoes resonating from the universe which may reveal more about the great Big Bang Theory.
8.13. **Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System**

- It is being developed by DRDO in collaboration with the private sector.
- ATAGS is a 155-mm towed (towed by another vehicle) artillery gun being developed in mission mode for the Army’s artillery modernisation programme.
- With a firing range of 40 kms, the gun boasts of advanced features such as high mobility, quick deployability, auxiliary power mode, advanced communication system, and automated command and control system.
- An Army team had been involved in the project since the conceptual stage to overcome considerable differences that Army and the DRDO had on past project.

8.14. **Minigrid and Microgrid**

- Mini grid is an off-grid power system with a generation capacity of between 10 KW and 500 KW. A minigrid should be able to serve larger commercial and small industrial loads.
- A ‘Micro Grid’ system is similar to a mini grid but having a generation capacity of below 10KW. The load served by a microgrid is usually residential only.
- Micro and mini grids generally operate in isolation to the electricity networks of the DISCOM-grid but can also interconnect with the grid to exchange power.
- Minigrid and microgrid usually source their power from renewable energy sources. Hence, they can be key player in drifting away from carbon-based energies.

**Game Changer For Rural Enterprises**

Usually, the power coming from the smaller off-grid solutions is DC energy. While it is good for lighting, it does not satisfy the community’s requirement to run any sort of business while Mini grid converts direct current (DC) to alternating current (AC) and it provides safety as per REC and CEA standards

**Advantages**

- The power generated from a mini grid can be seamlessly transferred to the national grid since it is already going through a a charge controller which manages the flow of energy and an inverter which converts the electricity from DC to AC.
- It also has a storage facility to meet night demand as well. The power that comes out is regular and standard with no fluctuations
8.15. **CNS Kaiyangxing or Mizar**

- It is a new electronic reconnaissance ship of China
- It is capable of conducting all-weather, round-the-clock reconnaissance on multiple and different targets.

8.16. **Piperlongumine (PL)**

- It is a chemical found in Indian long pepper that could stop the production of an enzyme that is commonly found in tumours.
- PL has shown activity against many cancers including prostate, breast, lung, colon, lymphoma, leukaemia, primary brain tumours and gastric cancer.

8.17. **Silicon Identified As ‘Missing Element’ in Earth’s Core**

- Scientists claimed to have identified the ‘missing element’ in the deep interiors of our planet that has eluded us for decades.
- This missing element is Silicon, which likely makes up a significant proportion of the Earth’s core after iron and nickel.
- It is far too deep to investigate directly, so scientists study how seismic waves pass through this region to tell them something of its make-up. It is mainly composed of iron, which makes up about 85 per cent of its weight and nickel, which accounts for about 10% of the core.
- To study the unaccounted five per cent of the core, researchers created alloys of iron and nickel and mixed them with silicon.
- They then subjected them to the immense pressures and temperatures that exist in the inner core. They discovered that this mixture matched what was seen in the Earth’s interior with seismic data.
- The discovery could help us to better understand how our world formed.

8.18. **Hawk Advanced Jet Trainer (AJT)**

- As there has been no demand for Hawk Advanced Jet Trainer (AJT) from the Indian Air Force, India is going slow on the development of a combat variant of this.
• It has tandem dual seats and provides basic, advanced flying and weapons training to budding pilots of the IAF.

• The trainer jet has a low wing and an all-metal structure and is slow flying, ground support aircraft.

• The aircraft has the capabilities to be used as a ground attack aircraft or for air defence.

• The cockpit provides excellent field of view and the aircraft is equipped with Inertial Navigation/Global Positioning System, head-up display and hands-on throttle and stick controls.

• India had contracted 123 Hawk Mk-132 AJT aircraft from BAE Systems of the U.K. for the IAF and the Navy.

• HAL is assembling the Hawks in India under a license.

8.19. Indian Model To Predict Impact Of Climate Change

Scientists of the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, are likely to unveil a model that can forecast the impact of climate change on the Indian monsoon until 2100.

Details

• Scientists at IITM are likely to unveil in December a computerised model that can forecast the impact of climate change on the Indian monsoon until 2100.

• This model is significant because it is the first time India will be submitting a home-grown assessment to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

• IITM scientists have customised significant parts of a model, called CFS 2 (Climate Forecast System version 2) and used it to give three month forecasts of the Indian monsoon, to project how the it will be altered by climate change over the next century.

• To be viable, the model has to first reasonably simulate land and ocean temperatures that existed in the 1850s, or before the carbon dioxide-spewing Industrial Revolution, and also capture droughts and floods in the years up to the present.

About IPCC:

• The IPCC was set up in 1988 by the World Meteorological Organization
The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to provide policymakers with regular assessments of the scientific basis of climate change, its impacts and future risks, and options for adaptation and mitigation.

- The IPCC works by assessing published literature. It does not conduct its own scientific research.
- IPCC assessments point to areas of well-established knowledge and of evolving understanding, as well as where multiple perspectives exist in the literature.
- The assessments are policy-relevant but not policy-prescriptive: they may present projections of future climate change based on different scenarios and the risks that climate change poses and discuss the implications of response options, but they do not tell policymakers what actions to take.

8.20. Watson

- Watson is a question answering computer system capable of answering questions posed in natural language.
- It is an IBM supercomputer that combines artificial intelligence (AI) and sophisticated analytical software for optimal performance as a “question answering” machine.
- It processes at a rate of 80 teraflops (trillion floating-point operations per second).
- To replicate (or surpass) a high-functioning human’s ability to answer questions, Watson accesses 90 servers with a combined data store of over 200 million pages of information, which it processes against six million logic rules.
- The device and its data are self-contained in a space that could accommodate 10 refrigerators.
- It can answer questions posed in natural language.

Current And Future Applications

- The goal is to have computers start to interact in natural human terms across a range of applications and processes, understanding the questions that humans ask and providing answers that humans can understand and justify.
- Watson may be used for legal research and in other information-intensive fields, such as telecommunications, financial services, and government.
- In healthcare, Watson’s natural language, hypothesis generation, and evidence-based learning capabilities allow it to function as a clinical decision support
system for use by medical professionals. E.g. - In February 2013, IBM and WellPoint, a major American healthcare provider, gave Watson its first commercial application, for utilization management decisions in lung cancer treatment at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

- It can also be used in Weather prediction.

8.21. A Sunspot With Centre Twice The Size Of Earth

In News

A new view of the dark, contorted centre of a sunspot that is nearly twice the diameter of the Earth, along with other invisible details of our Sun, has been unveiled by scientists. These results are an important expansion of the range of observations that can be used to probe the physics of our nearest star.

Some Highlights

- These sun spots are unveiled by the Atacama Large Millimetre/submillimetre Array (ALMA) antennas.

- ALMA had been carefully designed so they could image the Sun without being damaged by the intense heat of the focused light.

- Astronomers have harnessed ALMA’s capabilities to image the millimetre-wavelength light emitted by the Sun’s chromosphere – the region that lies just above the photosphere, which forms the visible surface of the Sun.

**ALMA Telescope**

- It is an international partnership of the European Southern Observatory (ESO), the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Natural Sciences (NINS) of Japan, together with NRC (Canada), NSC and ASIAA (Taiwan), and KASI (Republic of Korea), in cooperation with the Republic of Chile.

**What are sunspots?**

- They are **darker, cooler areas** on the surface of the sun in a region called the photosphere.

- Sunspots have temperatures of about 3,800 degrees K.

- They look dark only in comparison with the brighter and hotter regions of the photosphere around them.

- Sunspots can be very large, up to 50,000 kilometers in diameter.
- It is a single telescope of revolutionary design, composed of 66 high precision antennas located on the Chajnantor plateau, 5000 meters altitude in northern Chile.
- ALMA allows scientists to unravel longstanding and important astronomical mysteries, in search of our Cosmic Origins.

8.22. **Pinaka mark-II**

- Pinaka mark-II rockets were successfully test-fired from the Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur in Odisha.
- The earlier Pinaka version- Pinaka mark-I was an unguided rocket system.
- It has now been transformed into a guided version- Pinaka mark-II, with a navigation, guidance and control kit.
- Pinaka-II has a range of more than 70 km (Pinaka-I has range of 40 km).
- Pinaka is a multi-barrel rocket launch (MBRL) system used by the Indian Army.
- Pinaka is an indigenous weapon system designed and developed by DRDO.
- The launch system can fire a salvo of 12 rockets within 40 seconds.
- The rockets can be fitted with wide range of warheads, including high explosive, anti-tank bomblet, anti-personnel mines etc.
- The system was used effectively in Kargil war.

8.23. **Kirameki-2**

- Recently, Japan has successfully launched its *first military communications satellite* that is designed to upgrade its network in the face of China’s increasingly assertive maritime activity and North Korea’s missile threat.
- It is a X-band communications satellite built and operated by DSN Corporation for the Japanese Ministry of Defense.
- It is one of three defense communications satellites that will replace three civilian satellites currently used by the Self-Defense Forces.
- This new satellites will enhance direct communication among units of the Ground, Maritime and Air Self-Defense Forces through a high-speed and high-capacity network amid increased North Korean missile activity and potential threats to the nation’s remote islands.
8.24. **Smart Glasses: Automatically Focusses What You See**

- Scientists have developed new ‘smart glasses’ which can automatically adjust the focus on what a person is seeing, whether it is far away or close.

- The human eye has a lens inside that adjusts the focal depth depending on what you look at.

- However, as people age, the lens loses its ability to change focus. That is why many people require reading glasses or bifocals to see objects up close, and regular eyeglasses to see far away.

- But these ‘smart glasses’ can automatically adjust the focus, and so there will be no need for bifocals or to change between normal and reading glasses.

**Details:**

- Scientists, including one of Indian origin, developed new ‘smart glasses’

- These will end the need for wearing bifocals or constantly swapping reading glasses.

- These ‘smart glasses’ can automatically adjust the focus on what a person is seeing, whether it is far away or close.

- Glasses contain lenses made of glycerin, a thick colourless liquid, enclosed by flexible rubber-like membranes.

- When the wearer looks at an object, the mechanism in the glasses instantly measures the distance and tells the glasses how to curve the (liquid) lenses.

- If the user then sees another object that is closer, the distance meter readjusts and the lens is reshaped.

- Before putting them on for the first time, all users have to do is feed their eyeglasses prescription into an accompanying smartphone app, which then calibrates the lenses automatically via a Bluetooth connection.
9. **ECOLOGY AND ENVIRONMENT**

9.1. **Steep Decline In Ground Water Levels In Most States: Latest Report**

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<tr>
<th>Why In News</th>
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<tr>
<td>• The latest report of Ministry of Water Resources and Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) has indicated the alarming decline in the ground water levels in most of the states.</td>
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<td>• Overexploitation of available resources has been termed as the key reason.</td>
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<td>• The Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) has hinted at further increase in the number of overexploited areas also termed as 'dark' units.</td>
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<td>• An over-exploited unit means that the withdrawal of water is more than the recharge in that particular area.</td>
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<th>Background</th>
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<td>• Due to this rapid decline in ground water level Centre devised a master plan for artificial recharge of ground water in 2013.</td>
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<td>• The plan clearly set priority targets for different states to not only conserve but also recharge the ground water resources.</td>
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<td>• Creation of various artificial recharge structures like percolation tanks, check dams, nala bunds, gully plugs and gabion structures.</td>
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<td>• Provision to arrest ground water flow through ground water dams.</td>
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<td>• However majority of the states have not implemented the master plan so far. Only six states — Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Karnataka - have taken follow-up actions.</td>
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<td>• Union Territories (UTs) have taken prompt action regarding the implementation of the master plan for ground water recharge. Delhi, Andaman &amp; Nicobar Islands and Daman &amp; Diu have taken a lead in follow-up actions.</td>
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<th>Initiative On The Part Of Union Water Resources Ministry</th>
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<tr>
<td>• The Union water resources ministry has taken up aquifer mapping exercise in priority areas (overexploited units).</td>
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<tr>
<td>• An aquifer is an underground layer of water-bearing rock, from which ground water can be extracted.</td>
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The mapping will assist states in estimating quantity and quality of ground water in an aquifer and would help it in assessment of sustainable level of water extraction.

9.2. **Rs 6,000-Crore World Bank-Backed NGMIS Scheme Proposed To Manage Groundwater Resources**

- Centre has proposed a new scheme amounting Rs 6,000 crore to manage groundwater resources in India. It is sponsored by the World Bank.

- A sharp decline in groundwater level in many parts of the country due to over exploitation of existing resources has led to launch of this scheme.

- India annually extracts 245 Billion Cubic Meter (BCM) of groundwater which accounts for nearly 25% of the total global groundwater abstraction.

- About 222 BCM out of 245 BCM of groundwater is being used annually for irrigation while remaining 23 BCM is consumed by domestic and industrial sector.

- Half of the total cost of the scheme, called National Groundwater Management Improvement Scheme (NGMIS), will be supported by the World Bank as loan while the remaining half will be funded by the government through budgetary support.

- The fund under NGMIS will be used for capacity building, institutional reforms and infrastructure development.

- The scheme focuses on the "sustainable management of ground water by addressing demand-supply gap to reduce ground water consumption".

- The proposed programme will be in addition to what the World Bank is already supporting to improve the extent, quality and accessibility of water resources information system and strengthen the capacity of water resource professional and management institutions in India.

- NGMIS will be implemented across the country. However its special focus will be on states having 'dark' (over-exploited) zones where the withdrawal of water is more than the recharge.

- Infrastructure development includes- Building the recharge structure/facilities for utilising rain water directly from roof top. Creation of rain water harvesting structures for conserving surplus run-off and recharging ground water in aquifers.

- States with dark zones: These states include Haryana, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh (Bundelkhand region and parts of western UP) and Madhya Pradesh (Bundelkhand region). Indiscriminate use of
ground water, mainly for irrigation, has increased the number of over-exploited units from 802 in March, 2009 to 1,071 in March, 2011 in the country.

- State with over exploited Units: The over-exploited units are mostly concentrated in Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, western UP, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu.

**Implementation And Design**

- According to the World Bank the programme would be implemented during 2017-2022 period.

- It is being designed in coordination with existing programmes and activities including MGNREGA, the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) as well as the National Hydrology Project (NHP).

- The programme will also have a ‘performance-based incentive’ system as its key component to reward states and local authorities for improvement in groundwater management.

- The NGMIS will also look after the policy aspects of irrigation efficiency, crop diversification and artificial recharge in the areas which witnessed uncontrolled and unplanned groundwater extraction over the last 50 years.

9.3. **Delays Protection To Eco-Fragile Areas Of Uttarakhand Affected Due To Deadlock Between Environment And Water Ministries.**

**Why In News**

- The implementation of the Bhagirathi eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) conceived as a response to protect the ecologically fragile areas and topography of Uttarakhand and to prevent any natural or manmade ecological disaster like flash floods in 2013 has not seen the light of the day.

- The ESZ is expected to ensure "sustainable development" in the highly fragile areas from Gomukh to Uttarkashi.

- Key reason for non implementation lies in lack of consensus between the Environment and Water resources ministry over the provisions of a zonal master plan for its implementation.
Key Points Of Conflict

- The sticking points are the provisions concerning the construction of hydropower projects with a capacity of over 2 MW, riverbed mining and change of land use.
- The zonal plan in its current form allows for the construction of hydro projects with a capacity of over 2MW, but the 2012 ESZ notification disallows such a construction.
- The Uttarakhand government wants the notification relaxed to facilitate larger plants (up to 25 MW) in the state.

Demand Of Environment Ministry

- Further strengthening of the master plan particularly in respect of Hydro power projects.
- It has also recommended the formation of body of experts including geologists, climatologists, and biodiversity experts to monitor the proper implementation of the ESZ plan.
- Both the ministries have asked for a scientific assessment before allowing hydropower projects.
- They have also directed the Uttarakhand government to commission a "carrying capacity" study.

9.4. NBWL Gives Nod to Ken-Betwa Inter-Linking of Rivers Project

The National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) has given its clearance for the Ken-Betwa inter-linking of rivers (ILR) project.

Why NBWL Clearance Needed?

- The clearance of NBWL was required since the project requires diversion of forest land from core area of Panna Tiger Reserve.
- Nearly 8,650 hectares of forest land including part of Panna National Park in Madhya Pradesh will be submerged due to implementation of this project.
- The project has also been opposed due to its perceived negative impact on tiger reserve and wildlife sanctuaries.

Conditional Clearance

*NBWL has two important conditions before granting the clearance. They are as follows:*
- Integration of nearby sanctuaries including Ranipur and Rani Durgavati with the Panna Tiger Reserve to compensate loss of tiger habitat and complete ban on the fresh mining lease in the area.

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) will take care of the landscape plan for the area with the help of Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and state forest departments.

- According to environmentalists the NBWL recommendation does not mean the final wildlife clearance as all recommendations for de-notification of protected areas are scheduled to go to the Central Empowered Committee appointed by the Supreme Court.

- It would need clearances from the relevant district, state and National Ganga River Conservation Authorities apart from fresh Environmental Impact Assessment.

### About Ken-Betwa ILR Project

Please refer topic 1 in the ecology section of may 2016-17 current affairs.

### 9.5. Use Of Deer Antlers In Ayurveda Medicines. Kerala To Seek Union Government’s Approval

#### Why In News

- Kerala State Board for Wildlife (SBWL) has forwarded the proposal to National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) and Ministry of Environment and Forests, seeking suitable amendments to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 for using the antlers for medicinal purposes.

- The Kerala SBWL had approved a request from the state-run Oushadhi to collect and use antlers shed by spotted deer and Sambhars in zoos for preparing ayurvedic medicines.

- Antlers are the extensions of the deer’s skull. All three deer varieties namely deer, Sambhar, and barking deer having antlers are found in Kerala.

- Antlers are mainly used for invigorating spleen, strengthening bones/muscles and boosting blood flow.
What WPA 1972 Says?

- The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972 prohibits (bans) sale and use of antlers in India. The Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, has included antler in the definition of wildlife trophy that may be whole or any part of any captive animal or wild animal.

- Wildlife and wildlife trophies are considered to be owned by the government. The Act prescribes imprisonment up to 3 years and a fine of Rs. 25,000 for offences involving wildlife trophies.

9.6. Sowing App Helps To Increase The Yield By 30 Per Cent

Why In News

- A Sowing App, developed by Microsoft and International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in partnership with the Government of AP, has contributed to an average increase of 30 per cent in yield per acre. The app was launched in June 2016 as a part of a pilot project in Andhra Pradesh.

- The app was developed to help small farmers cultivating groundnut achieve optimal harvests by advising them on the best time to sow, soil conditions as well as components and other indicators like mineral compositions, acidic value, salinity level and so on.

- App is based on the intelligent cloud technology. The "intelligent cloud" is the back-end infrastructure that drives all of enterprise mobility. It combines the benefits of artificial intelligence (AI), server and storage virtualization, and policy-based automation together with advances in data management technology.

Utility of App

- The personalised village advisory dashboard provides important insights into soil health, recommends fertiliser, and forecasts seven-day weather.

- It also provides essential information such as seed treatment, optimum sowing depth, preventive weed management, land preparation, harvesting, shade drying, and storage via SMS.

- The data could be integrated with other data collected from the Rythu Kosam project to build predictive models for the farmers.

Techno-Economic benefits of the innovation

- The application of Intelligent Cloud will lay the foundations for digital agriculture.
Both Governments and farmers can reap the benefits of this app.

App has the potential to enhance the income of the farmers and provide the sustainable livelihood opportunities.

It will especially improve the lives of small farmers, besides giving a boost to digital agriculture initiative.

It will provide a further impetus to research and development in agriculture and bring in the required investment.

9.7. **Hope Island Becomes Graveyard For Olive Ridleys Turtles**

Recently 54 carcasses of Olive Ridley turtles were spotted on the shores of Hope Island in Andhra Pradesh.

**What Is The Reason Behind These Deaths**

- The breeding cycle of this species got severe blow due to mechanised fishing boats scouring in the Bay of Bengal coastline.
- These boats crush most of these turtles under it leading to their death.
- They flout laws prohibiting mechanised fishing within five kilometres of the shoreline.

**About Olive Ridley**

- Olive Ridley turtle is the smallest and most abundant of all sea turtle found in the world. It gets its name from its olive coloured carapace, which is heart-shaped and rounded.
- It is found in warm waters of the Pacific and Indian oceans. It spends entire lives in the ocean and migrates thousands of kilometres between feeding and mating grounds in the course of a year.
- During the breeding season they lay their eggs at Gahirmatha in Odisha.
- However the sandy stretches of Hope Island of the Coringa Wildlife Sanctuary have become the new breeding area.
- Mass nesting of hundreds of thousands of Olive Ridley sea turtles on the seacoast of Orissa is called arribada.
- Though found in abundance, their numbers have been declining over the past few years. It is recognized as **Vulnerable** by the IUCN Red list.
- In India, it is protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972.
Government Measures

- The Fisheries Department is encouraging the mechanised boat owners to fit a Turtle Excluder Device (TED) to their trawl nets to allow the turtles to pass.

- Operation Kachhapa, launched by the Wildlife Protection Society of India in 1998, collaborates with the Orissa State Forest Department and the Wildlife Society of Orissa and other local NGOs. Its Objective is to reduce turtle mortality and try to safeguard the future of the species by concentrating on three main activities:
  ❖ To improve patrolling of non-fishing zones and the protection of nesting sites.
  ❖ To support legal action on turtle conservation and fishing law violations.
  ❖ To build public support and awareness of sea turtle conservation issues. Setting up a Turtle Interpretation Centre in Bhubaneswar, Orissa's capital, to help spread awareness of the need for conservation activities;

9.8. Recent Wetland Notifications- Potential Threat: Environmentalists

What Is The News?

- Recently two notifications on wetlands have been issued by the Union environment ministry. They are being considered by the environmentalists who have been campaigning for protection of wetlands as a potential threat.

- First one constitutes the Central Wetlands Regulatory Authority (CWRA) - the nodal agency for identification, conservation and protection of wetlands for a term of just two months.

- Under the 2010 Wetland rules, the term of CWRA is for 3 years.

- The other one omits two clauses in the Wetland Rules 2010 on the constitution and term of the CWRA.

- This notification states that the authority will be constituted under the Environment Protection Act instead of under the Wetland Rules.

- These developments are significant because the National Green tribunal (NGT) is hearing an application seeking directions to the government to identify all wetlands in the country as specified in the Wetlands Rules (Conservation and Management) 2010.
Interim Directions by The NGT

- In July 2016, NGT, while hearing the environmentalists' plea, had directed that the CWRA hold meetings with all states and UTs every month to identify and notify all wetlands in the country.
- The tribunal has ordered CWRA to meet every month and submit a compliance report, along with minutes of each meeting.

Comparison b/w Wetland (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010 and 2016

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<tr>
<td>Time-Bound Action</td>
<td>Wetlands to be notified within a year.</td>
<td>It does away with the time bound process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Permitted Activities</td>
<td>It prohibits activities like the reclamation, constructing permanent structures within 50 m, setting up or expanding industries, throwing waste, etc.</td>
<td>Permits the wise use of wetlands. State authority has the power to decide what amounts to wise use of wetlands.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Terminology</td>
<td>Includes terms like “areas rich in genetic diversity” and “areas of outstanding natural beauty”. Also “Wetland Complexes” i.e. the set of wetlands dependant on each other have been mentioned.</td>
<td>New rules omit these words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Impact</td>
<td>Compulsory Environmental Impact Assessment</td>
<td>No need of EIA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citizens’ Check</td>
<td>Allows citizens to challenge to a decision taken by the CWRA before the NGT.</td>
<td>Does away with CWRA. There is no mention of a citizen’s right to challenge the state authority’s</td>
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**What Is The Significance Of These Notifications Context Of The Issue**

- The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has notified the Graded Response Action Plan to combat air pollution in NCR Delhi region.
- It has amended the pollution related laws and formally tasked a Supreme Court-appointed panel with implementing a graded action plan for pollution control.
- The Delhi specific comprehensive action plan was prepared by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) and was submitted to the Supreme Court in December 2016. The court had accepted the plan and asked the Union Government to notify it.
- Union Government has assigned the task of implementation of the Graded Response Action Plan to the EPCA (Environment Pollution Control Authority) under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

**About Plan**

- Graded Response Action Plan defines the measures to be taken based on air quality on the basis of PM 2.5 and PM 10 in the atmosphere. Particulate Matter are tiny particles of dust which can cause very serious respiratory disorders and even damage the lungs. The prescribed standards of PM 2.5 and PM 10 are 60 and 100 micrograms per cubic metre respectively.
- Based on the air quality the grades have been classified as Emergency, Severe, Very Poor and Moderate poor. It will be enforced by Environment Pollution Control Authority (EPCA).
- Under this plan emergency measures will be automatically enforced in NCR if level of PM2.5 breaches 300 micrograms per cubic metre (µgm/m3) and PM10 levels stay above 500 (µgm/m3) for two consecutive days.

**Measures Recommended By The Plan**

- The plan recommends measures like odd-even car rationing scheme and ban on construction activities to combat air pollution.
In case of ‘very poor’ air quality, it recommends banning diesel generators and increase in parking fee by three to four times.

It also lists a number of other measures such as closing of brick kilns, stone crushers and hot mix plants.

It lays stress on intensifying public transport services apart from increasing the frequency of mechanised cleaning and sprinkling of water on roads.

9.10. **NGT Orders Inspection Of Biomedical Waste Plants**

**Why In News**

- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has ordered inspection of plants which treat waste in the hospitals of Delhi and ensure proper segregation, collection and disposal of such waste.
- Earlier the tribunal had asked hospitals and clinics to ensure proper collection, segregation and disposal of bio-medical waste.

**About Bio-medical Waste**

- Bio-medical waste is any solid or liquid waste including its container and any intermediate product generated during the diagnosis, treatment or immunization of human beings or animals or research activities.
- Bio Medical waste consists of human anatomical waste like organs, tissues and body parts, waste sharps like hypodermic needles, syringes, scalpels and broken glass, discarded medicines and cytotoxic drugs, liquid waste from any of infected areas etc.
- Biomedical waste poses hazard due to two principal reasons – toxicity and infectivity.
- It leads to land/soil pollution along with contamination of water including groundwater.
- It also pollutes the rivers due to its ultimate discharge in river that too without proper treatment.
- Improper disposal increases risk of infection; encourages recycling of prohibited disposables and disposed drugs; and develops resistant microorganisms.

**Bio-medical Waste Management Rules, 2016**

- In 2016, the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests had issued new Bio-medical Waste Management Rules, 2016 for proper discarding of the bio-medical waste.
- It has simplified categorisation and authorisation. Thus, it will make a big difference to clean India Mission.
The new rules include vaccination camps, blood donation camps, surgical camps or any other healthcare activity.

Phase-out the use of chlorinated plastic bags, gloves and blood bags within two years;

Pre-treatment of the laboratory waste, microbiological waste, blood samples and blood bags through disinfection or sterilisation on-site in the manner as prescribed by WHO or NACO

Provision of training to all its health care workers along with their immunisation regularly.

Establishing a Bar-Code System for bags or containers containing bio-medical waste for disposal.

Report major accidents

Bio-medical waste has been classified into 4 categories instead of 10 to improve the segregation of waste at source.

The new rules prescribe more stringent standards for incinerator to reduce the emission of pollutants in environment.

State Government to provide land for setting up common bio-medical waste treatment and disposal facility.

Operator of a common bio-medical waste treatment and disposal facility to ensure the timely collection of bio-medical waste from the HCFs and assist the HCFs in conduct of training

9.11. **African Elephant on the Brink of Extinction**

**What Is The News**

- In Africa a shocking 24,000 elephants were killed in 2015 (that is approximately the entire elephant population of India) and 1,342 rhinos were poached in the same year.
- Africa is witnessing an illicit wildlife trade ranging from hundreds of millions of dollars to $5 billion — placing it in fourth place after drugs, weapons trafficking and human trafficking on the transnational crimes scene.

**What Are The Reasons**

- Climate change, pollution, loss of wild areas and poaching are the key factors.
- While in India habitat loss and fragmentation has threatened their survival, in African countries militarised poaching and criminal trade are driving them to extermination.
Increasing demand for the Ivory and Rhino horns in Asia especially in China, East and South-east Asia for traditional medicinal purposes is the major reason.

While both ivory and horn is used as an ingredient in traditional medicine, the horn — and bangles and cups made from it — has become a status symbol and a sure sign of wealth.

How The Trade Takes Place

Social media platforms like We Chat and Face book are used to openly sell smuggled wildlife parts.

Even bank transfers form part of the transactions and account numbers are openly shared on social media sites.

What Needs To Be Done

There is a dire need for better protection, monitoring and equipping guards to manage the supply side of this horrendous trade.

At the same time addressing the demand side of this equation is of equal importance. The smuggling routes of these criminal syndicates, operating between Africa and Asia, needs to be destroyed.

Hanoi Conference on the Illegal Wildlife Trade

International Conference on illegal wildlife trade took place in Hanoi, the Vietnam’s capital in November 2016. It called for-

i. Engagement of local communities in controlling and preventing the wildlife crimes.

ii. Focus on the prevention of cross border illegal wildlife trade.

iii. Focus on reducing the demand for illegal wildlife trade I consumer markets.

iv. International community has urged the Vietnam to use its criminal justice system effectively to curb this dangerous trade.

v. Better coordination and cooperation among the countries for surveillance, law enforcement and technology sharing for curbing the illegal wildlife trade.

9.12. Centre Decides To Ratify Of Kyoto Protocol

The Union Cabinet has given its approval to ratify the second commitment period (2013-2020) of the 1997 Kyoto protocol on containing the emission of Green House Gases (GHGs).
The KP was adopted in 1997, recognising that the developed countries are principally responsible for the current high levels of Greenhouse Gas (GHGs) in the atmosphere. It became operational in 2005.

The first commitment period of the KP was 2005-12. Its second commitment period was adopted in 2012. But, only 65 countries have so far ratified the Second Commitment Period (2013-2020).

What The Nations Are Expected To Do Under Kyoto

- Only developed nations are mandatorily required to undertake mitigation (emission cuts) targets and to provide financial resources and transfer of technology to the developing nations.
- Developing countries like India and China have no mandatory mitigation obligations or targets under the Kyoto Protocol.
- Amendments to the KP were adopted in Doha in 2012 for the period 2013-2020. Developed countries have already started implementing their commitments under the 'opt-in' provisions of the Doha Amendment. It is a procedure required to be followed for the amendment to enter into force. Under this instruments of acceptance have to be deposited in lower number for the initiation of amendment.

How Ratification Will Benefit India

- Ratification will help India in the implementation of Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) projects under the KP’s second commitment period. This will attract some investments in India as well.
- India has played a critical role in securing international consensus on climate change issues. Ratification will firmly showcase the India’s commitment to global cause of environmental protection and climate justice.
- Ratification of the Kyoto Protocol by India will encourage other developing countries also to undertake this exercise.

Comparing Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement

- Paris Agreement has been adopted in 2015 to stabilise Green House Gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would minimize interference with the climate system. It is going to be operationalised post-2020 (end of the KP’s second commitment period).
- Unlike the KP which requires only developed countries to take mandatory actions, the Paris Agreement mandates all countries to take action to minimise the impact of climate change as per their voluntary commitments and individual capacity.
Besides, it has advocated climate actions based on the principles and provisions of the Convention, such as the principle of Equity and Common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities (CBDR & RC)

9.13. **France Issues First 'Green Bonds' With Record 7 Billion Euro Sale**

**About the News**

- France has issued its first "green bonds" with a record seven billion euro ($7.5 billion) sale, paving the way for the establishment of a genuine market in renewable energy bonds.
- Proceeds from the sale of the 22-year bonds will be used to finance projects to address climate change.

**What are Green Bonds**

- Climate bonds (also known as green bonds) are fixed-income financial instruments linked with finding climate change solutions.
- Climate bonds are a relatively new asset class, but they are growing rapidly. The total volume of climate bonds was estimated at 160 billions of dollars on 2016; of which 70 billion were issued in 2016.

**Purpose Of Issuing These Bonds**

- Climate bonds are issued to raise finance for climate change solutions. Climate change solution includes either climate change mitigation or adaptation related projects or programs.
- These might be greenhouse gas emission reduction projects ranging focusing on clean energy or energy efficiency, or climate change adaptation projects like building Nile delta flood defences or helping the Great Barrier Reef adapt to warming waters.

**Is There Any Difference Between Climate Bond And Green Bonds**

- Though more or less similar, Climate bond is an extension of the green bond concept.
- Green bonds are issued in order to raise the finance for an environmental project.
- Climate bonds are issued to raise finance for investments in emission reduction or climate change adaptation.
9.14. **West Bengal to give legal protection to Hilsa Fish**

West Bengal fisheries department has proposed to give legal protection to Hilsa Fish to arrest its dwindling population.

**Action Proposed**

- In this regard, fisheries department is coordinating with the state home department to bring about provisions in CrPc and IPC.
- With the formal introduction of the provisions, Hilsa will become the first fish variety in the country to get legal protection.
- Anyone can be arrested or fined for selling, catching and buying small Hilsa (commonly called “khoka ilish” in Bengal). Small variety weighs less than 500gms and is called as juveniles.
- It is being predicted that saving even 1 per cent of these juveniles could enhance the Hilsa production by 4000 tonnes per year.

**Reasons for Depletion of Hilsa**

- Hilsa fish is on the brink of extinction due to decades of migration barriers, over-fishing and pollution.
- The fragmentation of the river has blocked the migration of the mature fisher, from sea to river for breeding and also the downstream migration of their progeny into the sea. Consequently, Hilsa fishery upstream has collapsed.
- Earlier as a protection measure, state government had declared five Hilsa sanctuaries on the Hooghly river from Farakka to Sagar (covering a stretch of 250 km) where fishing has been banned between June-August and October-December.
- Before the commissioning of the Farakka Barrage in 1972, Hilsa provided a lucrative livelihood for fishermen in mid-stretch of the river Hooghly, generating employment for thousands of fishermen from not just Bengal, but also Bihar and UP.