Current Affairs June 2019

ELITE IAS

8899999931/34

ELITE IAS

Our Courses

CLASSROOM PROGRAM
English/Hindi

Upgraded Foundation Course
General Studies

ONLINE COURSES

General Studies Video Classes
(Interactive)

ALL INDIA TEST SERIES
English / Hindi

General Studies
Prelims + Mains + Essay

CORRESPONDENCE COURSES

General Studies Pre. & Mains
(Interactive)

Index

Indian Economy & Economic Development

Ecology and Environment

Science and Technology, Defense, Health

More News

———🔲🔲🔲———

Editorial
US-IRAN Relations

- President Donald Trump recently decided to **unilaterally pull the U.S. out** of the **Iran nuclear deal** and to **re-imposing nuclear sanctions** against that country.
  It is a huge setback to multilateral diplomacy and the rules-based international order. The re-imposed sanctions will target **critical sectors of Iran's economy**, such as its energy, petrochemical, and financial sectors

- **Background:** The **Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action**, commonly known as the **Iran deal**, was signed in 2015 between **Iran, the U.S., China, France, Russia, the U.K., Germany and the European Union.** Under this deal, Iran agreed **not to build any more heavy water facilities**, eliminate its stockpile or medium-enriched uranium, cut its stockpile of low-enriched uranium, and reduce the number of its gas centrifuges. Other nuclear facilities in Iran would have to be converted into non-nuclear facilities.·
  In return, Iran will recover assets worth $100 billion frozen in overseas banks, and sanctions on the country by the U.S., the U.N. and the E.U. will be lifted.

Iran's Reaction:

- Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said that if the U.S. quits the nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers then Washington would regret it "like never before".

- Iranian President declared that his government **remains committed to a nuclear deal** with world powers, despite the US decision to withdraw, but is also ready to **resume uranium enrichment** should the new sanctions against Iran become effective.

- Undoubtedly, the US exit from the nuclear deal comes as a great defeat for Rouhani against the Iranian hardliners who warned him against diplomacy with the Americans.

5 ways India could be affected by U.S. decision to pull out of Iran nuclear deal:

- Even so, India could face the impact of the U.S. decision on the deal as well as instituting the **"highest level of economic sanctions"** in several ways:

1. **Oil prices:** The **impact on world oil prices** will be the immediately visible impact of the U.S. decision. Iran is presently **India's third biggest supplier** (after Iraq and Saudi Arabia), and any increase in prices will hit both inflation levels as well as the Indian rupee. **Non-oil trade with Iran**, which stood at about $2.69 billion of the total trade figures of $12.89 billion in 2016-17 may not be impacted as much, as New Delhi and Tehran have instituted several measures in the past few months, including allowing Indian investment in rupees, and initiating new banking channels, between them.

2. **Chabahar:** India's moves over the last few years to develop berths at the **Shahid Beheshti port in Chabahar** was a key part of its plans to circumvent Pakistan's blocks on trade with Afghanistan. India has already committed about **$85 million to Chabahar development** with plans for a total of $500 million on the port, while a **railway line to Afghanistan** could cost as much as $1.6 billion. New U.S. sanctions could slow or even bring those plans to a halt depending on how strictly they are implemented.

3. **INSTC:** Beyond Chabahar, India has been a **founder of the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** since it was ratified in 2002. It starts from Iran and aims to cut right across **Central Asia to Russia over a 7,200-km multi-mode network,** cutting down transportation and time taken by trade by about 30%. New U.S. sanctions will affect these plans immediately, especially if any of the

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in	**A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in**

1

countries along the route or banking and insurance companies dealing with the INSTC plan also decide to adhere to U.S. restrictions on trade with Iran.

4. **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation:** India joined the SCO along with Pakistan last year, and both was **formally admitted in June 2018**, This year, Chinese officials say they will consider inducting Iran into the 8-member Eurasian security organisation.

◆ If the proposal is accepted by the SCO, which is **led by China and Russia**, India will become a member of a bloc that will be seen as anti-American, and will run counter to some of the government's other initiatives like the Indo-Pacific quadrilateral with the U.S., Australia and Japan.

◆ The move may also rile other adversaries of Iran, like Saudi Arabia, UAE and Israel, with whom the government has strengthened ties in an **effort to balance its West Asia policy.**

5. **Rules-based order:** India has long been a **proponent of a "rules-based order"** that depends on multilateral consensus and an adherence to commitments made by countries on the international stage. By walking out of the JCPOA, the U.S. government has overturned the precept that such **international agreements are made by "States"** not just with prevailing governments or regimes.

◆ This could also impact all agreements India is negotiating both bilaterally and multilaterally with the U.S., and the government will have to choose its future course factoring in the new U.S. behaviour, especially after Mr. Trump withdrew from the U.N. Climate Change treaty (Paris Accord), and the Trans-Pacific Partnership with East Asian trading partners.

◆ New Delhi will have to consider a **new understanding of its ties** with Washington in this context, and some of this understanding may be built during the **first "2+2" dialogue** between Foreign and Defence Ministers of both countries to be scheduled in the next few weeks in Washington.

Which companies could be affected?

◆ A number of French firms have signed billion dollar agreements with Iran since the nuclear accord was signed in 2015.

◆ Aside from **Airbus,** they include French oil giant Total and the car makers Renault and Peugeot. Companies would have to wind up investments by November or face US sanctions.

Way Forward:

◆ With this decision President Trump is risking U.S. national security, recklessly upending foundational partnerships with key U.S. allies in Europe and gambling with Israel's security.

◆ This withdrawal from the JCPOA makes it **more likely Iran will restart** its nuclear weapons program in the future

◆ The U.S. stands **isolated in its decision**. Europe and other powers (UN permanent members) should stick together to respect the mandate of an international agreement. Any sanctions imposed by U.S. will **hurt the global economy** and may force Iran to stock nuclear weapons, further complicating the situation.

◆ Thus, the **need of the hour** is to standby with the agreement even after the U.S. has withdrawn.

—❑❑❑❑—

Art and Culture, Society, Social and National Issues

UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Orchha Town of Madhya Pradesh added to Tentative List

Why in news?

☞ The Orchha town of Madhya Pradesh has recently been included in tentative list of the World Heritage Sites of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

☞ The move came after the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) sent a proposal in this regard to the UNESCO in April 2019.

Orchha Town

◆ Situated on the banks of the river Betwa, **Orchha is located in Niwari district of Bundelkhand region** of Madhya Pradesh.

◆ The site is around 80 km far from Madhya Pradesh's Tikamgarh district and 15 km from Jhansi of Uttar Pradesh.

◆ The town is celebrated for its rich and ancient architecture of Chaturbhuj Temple, Orchha Fort Complex, and Raja Mahal among others.

◆ It is famous for its **two elevated minarets** - Saavan and Bhadon; and **four palaces** - Jahangir Palace, Rai Praveen Mahal, Raja Mahal, and Sheesh Mahal.

◆ It represents the concept of open bungalows, animal statues depicting the culture of Bundelkhand and stone work windows.

◆ The site houses '**Sri Ram Raja Mandir**'. It is the only place in India where **Lord Ram is worshipped as a King**, not as a deity, with this dedicated temple in his name.

◆ Built by Bundela dynasty's King Rudra Pratap Singh in the 16th century, the Orchha town boasts of Bundela architecture as well as Mughal influence due to the closeness of both the dynasties. Veer Singh Dev, King of Bundela dynasty, was a close friend of Mughal emperor Jahangir. King Dev also fought wars as Mughal emperor Akbar's aid.

What is UNESCO World Heritage Site?

◆ A World Heritage Site is a landmark or area which is selected by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as having cultural, historical, scientific or other form of significance, and is legally protected by international treaties. The sites are judged important to the collective interests of humanity.

UNESCO's World Heritage Site list

◆ A World Heritage Site is a place that is listed by UNESCO for its special cultural or physical significance.

◆ The list of World Heritage Sites is maintained by the international '**World Heritage Programme'**, administered by the UNESCO World Heritage Committee.

◆ The UNESCO World Heritage Committee is composed of 21 UNESCO member states, elected by the General Assembly.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

3

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

Criteria for inclusion in List of UNESCO World Heritage Sites

- Any heritage or any historical site has to be first on the tentative list to be a part of UNESCO's World Heritage sites. Once it makes it to the tentative list, then the proposal is sent to the UNESCO for inclusion in the final List of UNESCO World Heritage Sites, only if the site:
- Represents a masterpiece of human creative genius
- Exhibits an important interchange of human values over a span of time or within a cultural area of the world and depicts developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts or town-planning.
- Considered as an exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or has disappeared.
- An archetype of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape that depicts significant stages in human history.
- Showcases traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use, which represents cultural or human interaction with the environment.
- Associates with events, living traditions, ideas, beliefs, and artistic & literary works of outstanding universal significance.
- Contains areas of exceptional natural beauty and aesthetic importance.
- Represents stages of earth's history - record of life, on-going geological processes, or significant geomorphic or physiographic features.
- Represents on-going ecological and biological processes in the evolution and development of terrestrial, fresh water, marine ecosystems and communities of plants and animals.
- Contains significant natural habitats for conservation of biological diversity, including threatened species of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation.

Source: The Hindu, Wiki

Swachh Survekshan League 2020

Why in news?

☞ Recently, Swachh Survekshan 2020 League has been launched by the government. It will be a quarterly cleanliness assessment of Indian cities and towns. It will be integrated with Swachh Survekshan 2020, the 5th edition of Swachh Survekshan survey of urban India, which will be conducted between January and February 2020.

Swachh Survekshan League 2020 (SS League 2020)

- **Objective:** It has been launched with the aim of sustaining the on-ground performance of cities along with continuous monitoring of service level performance in cleanliness.

SS League 2020 Framework

- The SS League 2020 will be conducted in 3 quarters April- June, July – September and October-December 2019.
- It will have a weightage of 2000 marks for each quarter, which will be evaluated on the basis of monthly updation of SBM-U online MIS by cities along with citizen's validation on the 12 service level progress indicators through outbound calls. These two parameters will determine the quarterly ranking of cities.
- The ranks will be assigned in two categories:

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

4

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

ELITE IAS
(A Unit of Elite Academy for Education & Training Pvt. Ltd.)

June – 2019

(i) Cities with population of one lakh and above

(ii) Cities with population of less than 1 lakh

♦ The exercise will cover all ULBs that have come into existence on or before 31 December 2018.

Swachh Survekshan Survey

♦ The first edition of the annual cleanliness survey was conducted in January 2016. It involved the ranking of 73 cities.

♦ The 'Swachh Survekshan-2017' was conducted for 434 cities in January-February 2017.

♦ The third edition of the survey, which was held in 2018, was conducted across 4,203 cities in 66 days. It became the largest-ever pan-India sanitation survey in the world.

♦ The fourth edition of the cleanliness survey, Swachh Survekshan 2019 covered 4237 cities in a record time of 28 days. The survey was fully digitized and paperless.

♦ While Mysuru was judged as the cleanest city in India in the 2016 Swachh Survekshan, Indore was ranked as the cleanest city in India in the last three editions of the annual cleanliness survey.

Objectives of Swachh Survekshan

♦ The annual cleanliness survey aims to encourage large scale participation of citizens in cleanliness drives.

♦ It aims to ensure sustainability of initiatives taken towards garbage free and open defecation free cities.

♦ It aims to create awareness among all sections of the society regarding the importance of working together towards making towns and cities a better place to live in.

♦ The survey also aims to foster healthy competition among towns and cities to improve their service delivery to citizens, towards creating cleaner cities.

Swachh Survekshan League 2020: Way ahead

♦ The high performance of the Indian cities in Swachh Survekshan League 2020 will be crucial, as it will impact their ranking in Swachh Survekshan 2020, as 25 percent weightage of the quarterly assessment will be included in the annual survey in January 2020.   *(Source: PIB, Times of India)*

Draft National Education Policy 2019

Why in news?

☞ The draft of New National Education Policy has been recently submitted by the Committee led by the Chairman Dr. Kasturirangan on education policy.

Key Highlights

♦ The committee has proposed to rename the Ministry of Human Resource Development as Ministry of Education (MoE).

♦ In school education, a major reconfiguration of curricular and pedagogical structure was proposed.

♦ The policy calls for an Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) as an integral part of school education.

♦ A 5+3+3+4 curricular and pedagogical structure based on cognitive and socio-emotional developmental stages of children was proposed.

♦ It comprises of -

▪ Foundational Stage (age 3-8 yrs): 3 years of pre-primary plus Grades 1-2

▪ Preparatory Stage (8-11 years): Grades 3-5

ELITE IAS
(A Unit of Elite Academy for Education & Training Pvt. Ltd.)

June – 2019

- Middle Stage (11-14 years): Grades 6-8
- Secondary Stage (14-18 years): Grades 9-12

- The policy also seeks to reduce content load in school education curriculum.
- There will be no hard separation of learning areas in terms of curricular, co-curricular or extra- curricular areas.
- All subjects, including arts, music, crafts, sports, yoga, community service, etc will be part of the curricular.
- Thus, schools will be re-organized into school complexes.
- The policy promotes active pedagogy to focus on the development of core capacities and life skills, including 21st century skills.
- The committee recommends Extension of Right to Education Act 2009 to cover children of ages 3 to 18 (currently, 6-14).
- The committee proposes for massive transformation in teacher education.
- It calls for shutting down sub-standard teacher education institutions.
- It proposes moving all teacher preparation/education programmes into large multidisciplinary universities/ colleges.
- The 4-year integrated stage-specific B.Ed. programme will eventually be the minimum degree qualification for teachers.
- **In addition, a restructuring of higher education institutions with three types of higher education institutions was proposed -**

Type 1: Focused on world-class research and high quality teaching

Type 2: Focused on high quality teaching across disciplines with significant contribution to research

Type 3: High quality teaching focused on undergraduate education

- This will be driven by two Missions -Mission Nalanda & Mission Takshashila.
- There will be re-structuring of Undergraduate programs such as BSc, BA, BCom, BVoc of 3 or 4 years duration and having multiple exit and entry options.
- A new apex body Rashtriya Shiksha Ayog has been proposed.
- This is to enable a holistic and integrated implementation of all educational initiatives and programmatic interventions.
- The body will also coordinate efforts between the Centre and states.
- The National Research Foundation, an apex body, is proposed for creating a strong research culture.
- It will help build research capacity across higher education.
- The four functions of Standard Setting, Funding, Accreditation and Regulation will be separated and conducted by independent bodies.
- National Higher Education Regulatory Authority will be the only regulator for all higher education including professional education.
- The policy proposes to create an accreditation eco-system led by a revamped NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council).
- Professional Standard Setting Bodies for each area of professional education was proposed.
- UGC is to be transformed to Higher Education Grants Commission (HEGC).
- The private and public institutions will be treated on par, and education will remain a 'not for profit' activity.

Besides the above, the committee also recommended several new policy initiatives for -

- promoting internationalization of higher education
- strengthening quality open and distance learning

- technology integration at all levels of education
- facilitating adult and lifelong learning
- enhancing participation of under-represented groups
- eliminating gender, social category and regional gaps in education outcomes

Language

- Promotion of Indian and classical languages and setting up three new National Institutes for Pali, Persian and Prakrit were proposed.
- Indian Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI) has been recommended.
- The policy called for the proper implementation of the three-language formula (dating back to 1968) in schools across the country.
- Accordingly, students in Hindi-speaking states should learn a modern Indian language, apart from Hindi and English.
- In non-Hindi-speaking states, students will have to learn Hindi along with the regional language and English.
- The controversial three language provision was, however, dropped after protests against it in many states.

Rationale behind the move

- The extant National Policy on Education, 1986 modified in 1992 required changes to meet the contemporary and futuristic needs of India's large youth population.
- This New Education Policy is designed to meet the changing dynamics of the requirements in terms of quality education, innovation and research.
- The policy aims at making India a knowledge superpower by equipping students with the necessary skills and knowledge.
- It also focuses on eliminating the shortage of manpower in science, technology, academics and industry.
- The Draft Policy is built on the foundational pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability.

Language Controversy

- Following the submission of the draft National Education Policy 2019, there were protests against the three language formula.
- The controversial provision was thus revised by Dr. Kasturirangan-led committee that submitted it.

Old and new proposals

- **Earlier provision** - Students who wish to change one of the three languages they are studying may do so in Grade 6.
- But this is only as long as the study of 3 languages by students in the Hindi-speaking states would continue to include Hindi and English and one of the modern Indian languages from other parts of India.
- Likewise, study of languages by students in the non-Hindi-speaking states would include the regional language, Hindi and English.
- **New provision** - Students who wish to change one or more of the 3 languages they are studying may do so in Grade 6 or Grade 7.
- This is only as long as they are able to still demonstrate proficiency in three languages (one language at the literature level).
- This will be as per their modular Board Examinations held sometime during secondary school.

The continuing contention

- As per the earlier version, the committee stipulated the languages that students must choose to study from Grade 6.

- In the revised draft, the committee has merely omitted the references to the language that students may choose.
- However, the broader recommendation regarding the implementation of a three-language formula remains.
- In other words, the revised draft retains the recommendation to introduce a three-language formula from Class 1 onwards.
- It simply removes the clause stipulating the specific languages that students must choose in Grade 6.
- Also, the revision was not done by the Central government but by the committee that drafted the policy.

Is Centre's move justified?

- The draft policy's push for Hindi seems to be based on the premise that 54% of Indians speak Hindi.
- But according to the 2001 Census, 52 crore out of 121 crore people identified Hindi as their language.
- About 32 crore people declared Hindi as their mother tongue.
- This means that Hindi is the language of less than 44% Indians and mother tongue of only little over 25% people in India.
- But there has been greater push for making Hindi a pan-India language, which is seen as imposition of Hindi by many states, especially that of the South.

The way forward

- Language is primarily a utilitarian tool.
- While acquisition of additional tools can indeed be beneficial, compulsory learning should be limited to one's mother tongue.
- Besides, English, as the language that provides access to global knowledge and as a link language within India, could be a supportive language.
- Given this, not everyone is satisfied by the changes, and the three-language formula itself is seen as an unnecessary imposition.

Source: PIB, The Hindu, India Today

——□□□□——

| **11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in** | **8** | **A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in** |

Polity & Governance, Social Justice, Social Development

Eight new Cabinet Committees formed by the government

Why in news?

☞ The Union government recently released the composition of 8 Cabinet Committees, including two new ones (Investment and Employment).

What are the key Cabinet Committees?

☞ Cabinet Committee on Appointments - This panel makes appointments to posts of three service chiefs, Director General of Military Operations, chiefs of all Air and Army Commands.

☞ It also makes appointments to the posts of -
   i.   Director General of Defence Intelligence Agency
   ii.   Scientific Advisor to the Defence Minister
   iii.   Director General of Armed Forces Medical Services
   iv.   Director General of Ordnance Factories
   v.   Director General of Defence Estates
   vi.   Controller General of Defence Accounts
   vii.   Director of Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses
   viii. Solicitor-General
   ix.   Governor of the Reserve Bank of India
   x.   Chairman and Members of the Railway Board
   xi.   Chief Vigilance Officers in Public Sector Undertakings
   xii.   Secretariat posts of and above the rank of Joint Secretary in the Central Government

☞ It also decides on all important empanelments and shift of officers serving on Central deputation.

☞ Cabinet Committee on Accommodation - This determines the guidelines or rules with regard to the allotment of government accommodation.

☞ It also takes a call on the allotment of government accommodation to non-eligible persons and organisations, and decides the rent to be charged from them.

☞ It can consider the allotment of accommodation from the General Pool to Members of Parliament.

☞ It can consider proposals for shifting existing Central Government Offices to locations outside the capital.

☞ Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs - This panel is supposed to review economic trends, problems and prospects.

☞ The objective is to evolve a consistent and integrated economic policy.

☞ It also does the following:
   i.   coordinates all activities requiring policy decisions at the highest level
   ii.   deal with fixation of prices of agricultural produce and prices of essential commodities
   iii.   considers proposals for investment of more than Rs 1,000 crore
   iv.   deal with industrial licensing policies
   v.   review rural development and the Public Distribution System

☞ Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs - This draws the schedule for Parliament sessions and monitors the progress of government business in Parliament.

☞ It scrutinises non-government business and decides which official Bills and resolutions are to be presented.

☞ Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs - The committee addresses problems related to Centre-state relations.

☞ It also examines economic and political issues that require a wider perspective but have no internal or external security implications.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

9

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

☞ Cabinet Committee on Security - It deals with issues relating to law and order and internal security.

☞ It also deals with policy matters concerning foreign affairs with internal or external security implications.

☞ It also goes into economic and political issues related to national security.

☞ It considers all cases involving capital defence expenditure of more than Rs 1,000 crore.

☞ It also considers issues related to the -
  i. Department of Defence Production
  ii. the Department of Defence Research and Development
  iii. Services Capital Acquisition plans
  iv. schemes for procurement of security-related equipment

What are the two new panels?

♦ Cabinet Committee on Investment - This Committee will identify key projects required to be implemented on a time-bound basis.

♦ This applies to projects involving investments of Rs 1,000 crore or more, or any other critical projects, as may be specified by it, with regard to infrastructure and manufacturing.

♦ It will prescribe time limits for giving requisite approvals and clearances by the ministries concerned in identified sectors.

♦ It will also monitor the progress of such projects.

♦ Cabinet Committee on Employment and Skill Development - This is supposed to provide direction to all policies, programmes, schemes and initiatives for skill development.

♦ The objective is increasing the employability of the workforce for effectively meeting the emerging requirements of the economy.

♦ It facilitates mapping the benefits of demographic dividend.

♦ The committee is required to enhance workforce participation, foster employment growth and identification.

♦ It will work towards removal of gaps between requirement and availability of skills in various sectors.

♦ The panel will set targets for expeditious implementation of all skill development initiatives and to periodically review the progress in this regard.

♦ The addition of the two committees is indicative of the new focus areas for the government. The goal of both is new jobs.

What are Cabinet Committees for?

♦ The Cabinet Committees are institutional arrangements to reduce the workload of the Cabinet.

♦ These committees are extra-constitutional in nature and are nowhere mentioned in the Constitution.

♦ The executive works under the Government of India Transaction of Business Rules, 1961.

♦ These Rules emerge out of Article 77(3) of the Constitution.

♦ Accordingly, the President shall make rules for the more convenient transaction of the business of the Government of India, and for the allocation among Ministers of the said business.

♦ The Rules mandate the minister-in-charge of a department (ministry) to dispose of all business allotted to a department under him or her.

♦ However, on subjects involving more than one department, decision will have to be taken on concurrence.

♦ On failing such concurrence, decision will have to be taken by or under the authority of the Cabinet.

How are they formed?

♦ The Prime Minister constitutes Standing Committees of the Cabinet and sets out the specific functions assigned to them.

♦ S/he can add or reduce the number of committees.

- Ad hoc committees of ministers, including Groups of Ministers, may be appointed by the Cabinet or by the Prime Minister for specific matters.
- The strength of each committee varies from three to eight members.
- It usually includes cabinet ministers but non-cabinet members are not debarred.

Source: Indian Express, The Hindu

SC grants time extension for mediation in Ayodhya case till August 15

Why in news?

☞ The Supreme Court of India has extended the time given to the mediation panel to come up with an amicable solution in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid land dispute case till August 15, 2019.

Highlights

- The time extension was granted following a request by the Chairman of the mediation panel, Retired SC judge, Justice F M Khalifullah.
- Besides Justice F M Khalifullah, the other two members of the panel include spiritual leader Sri Sri Ravi Sankar and senior advocate Sriram Panchu.
- The top court had formed the three-member panel to find a solution to the long-standing dispute, which is acceptable by all parties.
- The panel was constituted after the court observed the lack of consensus between the parties in the matter.
- The mediation proceedings were held confidentially and the court had banned the media from reporting it.
- The proceedings were directed to be held in Faizabad, newly renamed as Ayodhya, where the disputed site is located.
- The status report of the hearings was to be submitted to the court within the time of four weeks.

Background

- The Supreme Court had on March 8, 2019 decided to refer the Ayodhya-Babri Masjid title dispute case for mediation.
- The apex court formed a panel of mediators to resolve the issue and asked them to conduct in-camera proceedings and complete the mediation within a period of eight weeks.
- The court also directed that the mediation proceedings should be conducted with the utmost confidentiality for ensuring its success.

Mediation Process: Who is in favour and who is not!

- While the Muslim petitioners welcomed the apex court's decision on mediation, Hindu bodies except for the Nirmohi Akhara and the Uttar Pradesh government opposed the suggestion.
- The Hindu bodies opposed the idea of mediation by arguing that the earlier attempts of reaching a compromise failed and provisions of Civil Procedure Code (CPC) require public notice to be issued before the start of process.
- The decision for mediation was taken while the apex court was hearing appeals against the verdict of Allahabad High Court, delivered on September 30, 2010.
- The high court verdict had then ordered a three-way division of the disputed Babri Masjid- Ayodhya land between the Nirmohi Akhara sect, the Sunni Central Wakf Board, Uttar Pradesh and Ramlalla.

Source: The Hindu

Deadline for finalisation of Assam NRC will not be extended: Supreme Court

Why in news?

☞ The Supreme Court has recently ruled that it will not extend the deadline for finalization of the Assam National Register of Citizens (NRC). Hence, the final Assam NRC should be readied by July 31, 2019.

National Register of Citizens of Assam

◆ The National Register of Citizens (NRC) is a register which contains the name of all citizens of India residing in Assam. The process of NRC update in Assam has been taken up as per a Supreme Court order in 2013. The update is being carried out under the Citizenship Act, 1955, and according to rules framed in the Assam Accord, 1985.

◆ Assam, which saw migratiion of people from Bangladesh since the early 20th century, is the only state having an NRC, first prepared in 1951.

◆ The first draft of the NRC for Assam was published on December 31, 2017 and it incorporated the names of 1.9 crore people out of the total 3.29 crore applicants.

Assam Accord

◆ Assam Accord is a Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) signed between representatives of the Government of India and the leaders of the Assam Movement- a movement against illegal immigrants in Assam. As per the accord, there has to be a separate NRC for Assam.

◆ Citizenship Act, 1955- dealing with acquisition and loss of citizenship in India- was amended in 1985 to incorporate Section 6A. This section fixes March 25, 1971 as the cut-off date for granting citizenship to Bangladeshi migrants in Assam.

◆ The draft Assam NRC was published on July 30, 2018 in which the names of 2.89 crore of the 3.29 crore people were included. Over 35 lakh people excluded from the draft had filed claims for Indian citizenship.

November 2018 ruling of the Supreme Court (SC):

◆ The SC had allowed claimants for Assam NRC to rely on five documents, which were earlier objected to by NRC coordinator, to prove their citizenship.

◆ All these documents were subjected to a thorough process of verification and were acceptable only after complete satisfaction of the genuineness.

These five documents are:

1) Names in NRC, 1951
2) Names in Electoral Roll up to March 24, 1971
3) Citizenship Certificate and Refugee Registration Certificate
4) Certified copies of pre-1971 Electoral Roll, particularly, those issued by Tripura
5) Ration Card

What is the issue with the process of NRC inclusion?

◆ Assam is a flood-prone area and every year thousands of people lose their homes and possessions, including documents, in floods or other calamities like land erosion and conflicts between communities. As a result, the possession of documents and legacy data is a luxury available to only the privileged.

◆ The districts of Nagaon, Bongaigaon, Darrang and Kamrup Metro that are most affected by the NRC are dominated by Bengali-speaking people, who were originally the inhabitants of East Bengal.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

12

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

- The community was first brought into Assam to clear the dense forest and cultivate the land. The main influx of people occurred during partition and before the Bangladesh War in 1971 when about 10 million people came to India from Bangladesh to escape persecution.
- Further, the NRC has also been exclusionary of women. In some areas, child marriage is highly prevalent and hence, women do not have the required documents.
- While communities that have been given the status of original inhabitants have not had to undergo stringent verification of their panchayat certificate, Muslim women and Bengali Hindu women who provided the same were put through a stringent verification process.
- At the same time, the transgender community remains almost entirely unlisted in the NRC.

The way ahead

- Deportation of thousands of people who have been living in a place for almost half a century is both inhuman and impractical. The least that can be done now is to ensure the rights of the people who are currently residing in the country. Substantial work is required towards eliminating conditions that push marginalised groups to migrate across borders amidst and despite so much risk.

Source: The Hindu, Indian Express, EPW

Home Ministry terminates Black List of Indian-origin people

Why in news?

☞ The Home Ministry has decided to discard its *'Black List'* of Indian-origin people. The list mostly comprised the names of **people belonging to the Sikh Community, who have taken asylum abroad under the plea of alleged persecution in India.**

Implications of the move

- As per Home Ministry officials, all such people presently in the blacklist will be given regular visa as well as Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cards.
- Indian missions and posts abroad will no longer be required to maintain any such local lists, known as 'Black lists'.
- All such Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs) and their families who are not in the main adverse list of the government will now be granted a visa and consular services at par with foreigners of that country.
- In another decision, the MHA also delegated the Foreigners Regional Registration Officers (FRROs) to grant permits to foreigners to visit protected and restricted area in the country.
- The state governments along with FRROs will now to be able to grant permits for travel other than tourism in areas that were hitherto restricted areas.

Exceptions

- Some areas in North-Eastern states, J&K, Himachal Pradesh and a few islands in Andaman and Nicobar islands are currently under restricted and protected areas.
- Foreigners are required to take special permissions to visit such places.

Black List

- The Black List was maintained by Indian missions and posts abroad.

Who all are included in the list?

- The Indian-origin people who took asylum abroad under the plea of alleged persecution in India are included in the list.

What does it mean to be on the Black List?

- Those who are in the Black list are denied visa services by Indian missions and posts.

Impact of canceling the List

- With the decision to do away with the list, such asylum seekers along with their family will be granted visa and consular services at par with foreigners of the country in which they are living.
- The asylum seekers, who are mostly Sikhs, can also obtain Overseas Citizen of India cards if they have held normal Indian visas for at least two years. *(Source: The Hindu)*

General Elections 2019 – Pros and Cons of the Electoral Process

Why in news?

☞ The general elections for the 17th Lok Sabha saw some serious concerns being raised on the functioning of the Election Commission (EC).

What were the key contentions?

- Questions were raised about the prolonged election of seven phases.
- The EC has always maintained that the most pressing concern is voter security, for which the Central armed police forces are deployed.
- But due to their limited availability, they had to be deployed on rotation, and so is the multi-phase election.
- If the numbers of these forces were adequate, the EC could conduct elections in one day.
- There was an unprecedented attack on the EC for being soft on the top leadership of the BJP for repeated violations of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).
- The MCC is much more difficult to operationalise in the age of social media and in a prolonged election nature.
- The cost-benefit analysis of multi-phase versus short phase elections in the face of such new challenges should be done afresh.

Money power

- It is becoming more and more expensive to contest elections.
- In this backdrop, the role of money power was alarming in this election and the problem of black money was alive.
- Money, drugs/narcotics, liquor, precious metals and freebies worth around Rs. 3,500 crore were seized this time (Rs. 1,200 crore in 2014).
- According to EC, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Delhi, Punjab and Andhra Pradesh were the top 5 States/UTs that accounted for the total seizures.
- A cause for worry is that drugs/narcotics formed a large part of the seizures, with Gujarat topping the list in this.

VVPAT

- The EC was questioned for its stand on the sample size for Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) verification.
- The Supreme Court had advised the EC to increase the mandatory random counting to 5 VVPATs per Assembly segment.
- This laid emphasis on better voter confidence and credibility of electoral process.

- As the election progressed, the Opposition made two more demands:
- The 5 machines must be counted in the beginning
- In case of even one mismatch, all machines in the Assembly segment must be counted
- The EC examined these proposals only to reject them as being unfeasible.
- Rather than being on the defensive, the EC should have discussed this issue with political parties, with an open mind.

Judiciary

- The Supreme Court's repeated interventions (as many as 6) during the elections have long-term implications.
- Notably, Article 329 of the Constitution bars courts from interfering in electoral matters after the election process has been set in motion.
- But the court had to intervene repeatedly for the much needed course correction.
- The court expressed displeasure over the EC's stand when it submitted that it was "toothless" and "powerless" to act on hate speeches.
- On SC setting EC a deadline to act on this, the EC took strong and unprecedented action against some political leaders.
- It debarred them from campaigning for up to 3 days by invoking Article 324.
- This was laudable, but when it came to acting on complaints against the Prime Minister and the BJP president, it reacted differently.

Dissent in EC

- It came to light that at least one Election Commissioner had dissented in 5 out of 11 EC decisions concerning MCC violations.
- Dissent is good news for a constitutional body as it is a healthy sign of objective deliberation and democratic functioning.
- His demand for his dissenting note to be made public was worthy of positive consideration.

What lies ahead?

- The election process in India that deserved to be remembered as a subject of national pride became mired in several controversies.
- The role of money power, paid and fake news, communal polarisation and hate rhetoric pose serious challenges to the very foundations of India's electoral system.
- India must introspect over these issues and find answers.

Source: The Hindu

——□□□□——

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in	**15**	**A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in**

International Relations, India & the World and International Affairs

US President Donald Trump declares national emergency

Why in news?

☞ The President of the United States, Donald Trump on May 15, 2019 **declared a national emergency** to protect the US computer networks from foreign adversaries.

☞ The announcement was made through an executive order that effectively **bars US companies from using foreign telecoms** that are believed to pose a risk to the security of the nation.

Highlights

◆ The move has authorized US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross **to block transactions that involve information or communications technology** that pose an unacceptable risk to the national security of the United States.

◆ Though the executive order does not name any company specifically, according to analysts it is mainly directed at Chinese telecommunications giant *Huawei*.

◆ Following the order, the US Commerce Department announced the inclusion of Huawei Technologies and its affiliates to the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) Entity List, making it more difficult for the Chinese telecom giant to conduct business with US companies.

◆ The inclusion in the entity list means that the US companies will no longer be able to sell or transfer technology to Huawei without a license issued by the BIS.

◆ Several nations including the US have raised concerns that Huawei's products could be used by China for surveillance, though the company has denied such claims.

Impact

◆ The executive order aims to *protect the United States from foreign adversaries* who are increasingly creating and exploiting vulnerabilities in information and communications technology infrastructure and services.

◆ The move will give the United States the power to prohibit transactions posing an unacceptable risk to national security.

Background

◆ The announcement comes on the backdrop of an escalating trade war between the US and China. The US President had complained about China's trading practices since before he took office in 2016.

◆ Recently, the US almost doubled the tariffs on $200bn of Chinese goods and China retaliated with its own tariff hikes on US products.

◆ The latest US decision is likely to worsen tensions further between the two nations. Huawei has been at the centre of the US-China power struggle that has dominated global politics over the past year.

◆ The US has already restricted federal agencies from using Huawei products and has encouraged allies to shun them. Other nations such as Australia and New Zealand have blocked the use of Huawei gear in next-generation 5G mobile networks.

Source: The Hindu, Indian Express

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

16

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

IMD World Competitiveness Rankings-2019

Why in news?

☞ India ranks 43rd most competitive economy in the world in IMD World Competitiveness Rankings-2019.

☞ India has moved up one place than previous ranking. Singapore secured top position from the third position last year, however US has slipped to the third place in the 2019 edition of the IMD World Competitiveness Rankings.

Highlights

- Singapore has ranked as the world's most competitive economy for the first time since 2010.
- Hong Kong SAR and USA are on second and third positions respectively.
- Switzerland grabbed the fourth place, thanks to economic growth, the stability of the Swiss franc and high-quality infrastructure.
- The United Arab Emirates (UAE) entered the top five for the first time earlier in 2016 it was ranked 15th.
- Venezuela remained (63rd) at the bottom of the ranking due to inflation, poor access to credit and a weak economy in the country.

India's ranking

- India has gained one point benefit by coming to 43rd position. Benefit in ranking was a result of Improvements in business legislation, increase in public expenditure on education.
- India has scored well on several economic parameters and tax policies but has lagged in terms of public finance, societal framework, education infrastructure, health and environment.
- However, India is also facing some challenges like maintaining high growth with employment generation, fiscal discipline and Digital literacy and internet bandwidth in rural areas.

IMD World Competitiveness Ranking

- It is basically a list which is compiled by the Switzerland-based International Institute for Management and Development (IMD)'s World Competitiveness Center (WCC).
- In order to facilitate long-term value creation, The IMD measures how well countries manage all their resources and competencies.
- It takes into account a wide range of statistics such as unemployment, GDP and government spending on health and education, as well as data from an executive opinion survey covering topics such as social cohesion, globalisation and corruption. (***Source: The Hindu***)

US imposes harsher sanctions on Iran's iron, steel, copper and aluminium industry

Why in news?

☞ The President of the United States, Donald Trump recently **imposed harsher sanctions on the iron, copper, steel and aluminium industry of Iran.**

Key facts

- The move is aimed at stopping Iran from pursuing its nuclear interests and acquiring nuclear weapon and intercontinental ballistic missiles.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

17

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

- The decision comes a year after President Trump decided to pull the United States out of the 2015 nuclear deal, calling it fatally flawed and one-sided and re-imposed economic sanctions against the nation.

Why did the US exit the nuclear deal?

- The Trump administration withdrew from the nuclear deal stating that it had failed to protect American national security interests and enabled Tehran's malign behaviour.
- Trump called the deal **defective at its core** and said that he feared that it will allow the Iranian regime to **accumulate nuclear weapons.**
- He stated that the deal allowed the Iranian regime to preserve its nuclear infrastructure, **keep enriching uranium** and continue research and development.

US Sanctions on Iran

- Immediately after announcing **US withdrawal from the nuclear deal,** the Trump administration stated that it would **re-impose sanctions on Iran** that were suspended under the deal but will allow grace periods for businesses to gradually slow down activity.
- The harsh US sanctions were announced against more than **700 individuals, entities, aircraft and vessels, covering Iran's banking and energy sectors.** Under the sanctions, foreign businesses and banks doing business with Iran were forced to exit such arrangements or go against the United States.
- The US also **reinstated penalties for countries and companies** in Europe, Asia and other continents that do not halt Iranian oil imports.
- However, it **temporarily exempted eight countries,** *India, China, Japan, Italy, Greece, South Korea, Taiwan and Turkey,* from the US sanctions for buying Iranian oil, as they showed a significant reduction in oil import from the nation.
- While three of the eight nations-Italy, Greece and Taiwan- stopped importing oil from Iran, **the sanction waivers for the other five ended on May 2, 2019** and the US refused to grant them any grace period to comply with the decision.
- With the current decision, the US President has now imposed sanctions on Iran's top three exports -oil, petrochemicals and metals.

Why have the sanctions been imposed?

- The decision to impose tougher sanctions on Iran was **fuelled by the nation's continuous effort to engage in destructive and destabilising activities.**
- The White House claims that the Iranian regime continues to develop its ballistic missile capabilities and support terrorism.
- The executive order, hence, aims to take steps to **deny Iran the revenue derived from the export of its copper, iron, steel and aluminium products** that it may use to provide funding and support for the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, terrorist groups and networks, campaigns of regional aggression and military expansion.

Background

- The harsher US sanctions come a day after Iran announced its decision to pull out from some parts of the 2015 nuclear deal.
- **Iran announced the suspension of two key commitments,** first being the *Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA)* that Iran was adhering to, which includes the **sale of surplus enriched uranium and heavy water.**
- The regime also gave the **European Union, Russia and China 60 days** to implement their financial and oil commitments to the deal, upon the failure of which, **Iran would resume production of higher-enriched uranium**, which is currently capped.

- Iran's decision to pull out of some parts of the deal followed increased pressure by the United States, which recently deployed an aircraft carrier strike group to the Middle East in a warning message to Iran.
- Besides ending sanction waivers extending to five Iranian oil importers including China, Japan, India and Turkey, the US had also recently **designated Iran's Revolutionary Guard as a foreign terrorist organization.** *(Source: The Hindu)*

Singapore passes new bill to check fake news

Why in news?

☞ The Parliament of Singapore recently passed new laws to fight the menace of fake news. The laws will **empower the authorities to order the removal of any content reported to be fake** despite fierce criticism from tech giants and the media and rights groups.

☞ The **Protection from Online Falsehoods and Manipulation Bill** will enable the government to order social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to put up warnings next to posts that the authorities deem to be false or get them taken down in extreme cases.

Key Highlights

- The new laws were passed on May 8 after being debated upon in the Parliament for two days. Singapore's Parliament is dominated by the ruling People's Action Party.
- The state's small opposition party- Workers' Party, which has six elected members in the 89-seat chamber, opposed the new measures.
- The new bill grants the ruling government with broad powers including the ability to **demand corrections in the news** that is deemed fake, demanding the **removal of such content,** or **blocking websites** deemed to be publishing fake news in extreme cases.
- It also empowers the government ministers to act to protect national security, public health, public finance, public safety and tranquillity in the friendly relations between Singapore and other countries.
- The penalties for not complying with the laws include steep fines and jail time.
- The government stated that the new laws target false statements and not opinions and that ordering corrections to be placed alongside the fake news will be the primary response rather than fines or jail terms.

Criticism

- The new laws have sparked outrage from rights groups, technology companies and media organisations who fear that they could stifle online discussion.
- According to the critics, the legislation **criminalises free speech** and it will give the Singapore authorities **unchecked powers to censor the online views that it disapproves.** They claim that the new legislation doesn't even provide any real definition of what is true or false or misleading.
- They further argued that the private sector should have the final say on what constitutes false and irresponsible statements.
- The critics stated that the problem of fake news should be tackled through fact-checking websites, vigilance by tech giants such as Google, Facebook and Twitter and increased media literacy.

Background

- Singapore, which regulates its large local media outlets, is ranked 151 out 180 in the World Press Freedom Index released by Reporters Without Borders.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

19

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

◆ Overall, the new bill is expected to impact freedom of expression and curtail the rights of individuals in Singapore to freely express opinions and participate in informed discussions and even debates, which are necessary to ensure executive transparency and accountability.

Source: The Hindu

SDG Gender Index 2019

Why in news?

☞ The SDG Gender Index, a new index to measure global gender equality, was launched recently.

What are the key findings?

◆ The global average score of the 129 countries (with 95% of the world's girls and women) is 65.7 out of 100 ("poor" in the index).

◆ Nearly 1.4 billion girls and women are living in countries that get a "very poor" grade.

◆ Altogether, 2.8 billion girls and women live in countries that get either a "very poor" (59 and below) or "poor" score (60-69).

◆ Just 8% of the world's population of girls and women live in countries that received "good" gender equality score (80-89).

◆ Notably, no country achieved an "excellent" overall score of 90 or above in gender equality.

◆ Besides, not all countries' score on the index correlate with national income.

◆ Some countries perform better than what would be expected based on their GDP per capita, and others underperform.

◆ With all these, it was highlighted that the world was far from achieving gender equality.

Indian Context

◆ India has been ranked at 95th among 129 countries in the index.

◆ India's highest goal scores are on health (79.9), hunger & nutrition (76.2), and energy (71.8).

◆ Its lowest goal scores are on partnerships (18.3, in the bottom 10 countries), industry, infrastructure and innovation (38.1), and climate (43.4).

◆ On indicators that define the goals, India scored 95.3 on the percentage of female students enrolled in primary education who are overage.

◆ In the proportion of seats held by women in national parliament, India scored 23.6; women made up 11.8% of Parliament in 2018.

◆ On seats held by women in the Supreme Court (4%), India has a score of 18.2.

On gender-based violence, indicators include the following -

◆ Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 18 (27.3%)

◆ Women who agreed that a husband/partner is justified in beating his wife/partner under certain circumstances (47.0%)

◆ Women aged 15+ who reported that they feel safe walking alone at night in the city or area where they live (69.1%)

About the SDG Gender Index

◆ The SDG Gender Index has been developed by Equal Measures 2030, a joint effort of regional and global organisations including:
  1. African Women's Development and Communication Network
  2. Asian-Pacific Resource and Research Centre for Women
  3. Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation

4.   International Women's Health Coalition
- The index accounts for 14 out of 17 SDGs (sustainable development goals).
- The goals cover aspects such as poverty, health, education, literacy, political representation and equality at the workplace.
- A score of 100 reflects the achievement of gender equality in relation to the targets set for each indicator.
- A score of 50 shows that a country is about halfway to meeting a goal.

Source: The Hindu, Business Standard

Government extends ban on Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

Why in news?

☞ In its latest notification, the Union Home Ministry extended the ban imposed on the militant group, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for its strong anti-India posture and the threat it poses to the nation.

☞ According to the Indian Government, the LTTE has been covertly working towards the creation of Tamil Eelam, a proposed independent state for Tamils, and has been undertaking fundraising activities for the same.

Key Highlights

- The Home Ministry's notification noted that the activities of LTTE's remainder cadres, dropouts and supporters who have been traced recently in Tamil Nadu suggest that the LTTE cadres sent to Tamil Nadu would ultimately be utilised by the militant group for unlawful activities.
- The notification stated that despite the ban, many pro-LTTE organizations and individuals were trying to extend support to the outfit.
- As per the Central Government, the activities of LTTE continue to pose a threat and are detrimental to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India as well as the public order. Therefore, the government felt that it should extend a ban on the outfit and declare it as an unlawful association.
- According to the official notice, the LTTE leaders, operatives and supporters have been vehemently opposing India's policy on their organisation and the action of the State machinery in curbing their activities.
- The militant outfit also continues to adopt a strong anti-India posture and continues to pose a grave threat to the security of Indian nationals.

What is LTTE?

- The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), commonly known as the Tamil Tigers, were a separatist militant organization fighting for an independent homeland for Sri Lanka's Tamil minority in northern Sri Lanka.
- Velupillai Prabhakaran founded the group in 1972 and by the late 1980s was the dominant Tamil militant group in Sri Lanka. After a number of failed negotiations, the Sri Lankan government declared an all-out offensive against the LTTE in 2006.
- By May 2009, government forces had defeated the LTTE and killed Prabhakaran. An estimated 70,000 people were killed during the conflict between the LTTE and the Sri Lankan government.
- The LTTE is recognized for having carried out a number of high-profile assassinations, including the assassination of Sri Lankan President Ranasinghe Premadasa in 1993 and the former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1991.
- The LTTE consisted of a highly developed military wing and a secondary political wing. The military wing had a naval group, an airborne unit, an intelligence wing, and even a specialized suicide terrorist unit. The group was also notorious for its use of women and children in combat.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

21

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

Background

- India had banned the LTTE after the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991. The ban on the group was last extended for five years in 2014.
- Its objective for a separate homeland (Tamil Eelam) for all Tamils threatens the sovereignty and territorial integrity of India, and amounts to cession and secession of a part of the territory of India from the Union and thus falls within the ambit of unlawful activities.
- The LTTE has been declared as a terrorist organisation by over 32 countries, including the European Union.

Source: The Hindu

India, Vietnam discuss ways to strengthen strategic partnership

Why in news?

- India and Vietnam recently discussed a range of issues, including ways to strengthen the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two nations to ensure peace and security in the region.
- This was discussed during the high-level talks held between Vietnamese Prime Minister Xuan Phuc and visiting Indian Vice President Venkaiah Naidu in Hanoi. The Indian Vice President was on a four-day visit to Vietnam.

Highlights

- **Bilateral Ties:** India and Vietnam share a strong bilateral relationship, based on mutual understanding, trust and similar views on regional and international issues.
- **Defence and Security:** The two nations agreed to strengthen cooperation in the field of defence and security, peaceful uses of atomic energy and outer space, oil and gas and renewable energy, agriculture and innovation-based sectors.
- **Indo-Pacific region:** The nations also reiterated the importance of building a peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific region on the basis of respect for national sovereignty and international law. They agreed to work towards an inclusive, open, transparent and rules-based regional architecture, based on freedom of navigation and peaceful settlement of disputes in accordance with the international law.
- **Space:** The Indian Vice President informed the Vietnamese Prime Minister that India is ready to partner with the nation in satellite construction, both for civilian and non-civilian uses.
- **Trade:** Vietnam is an important trading partner of India. The bilateral trade between the two nations stood at nearly USD 14 billion in 2018, having nearly doubled from USD 7.8 billion three years ago. To further boost bilateral ties, the two nations expressed commitment to enhancing trade and investments and agreed to facilitate direct air connectivity to promote tourism, trade and people-to-people relations.
- **Pharmaceutical Industry:** Indian Vice President Naidu sought Vietnamese Prime Minister's personal intervention in facilitating the entry of Indian pharmaceutical products into the nation and assured him that the Indian companies can provide high tech health systems and medicines for public health in Vietnam at an affordable cost.

What is the Significance?

- Vice President Naidu's visit has not only boosted the bilateral relationship between India and Vietnam, but also provided an opportunity to review various areas of collaboration and cooperation of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, with nation's leadership.

- Further, his participation at the UN Day of Vesak Celebrations emphasized shared civilizational heritage of the two countries.
- At the conclusion of the talks, Naidu invited Vietnamese Vice President Thinh to undertake a visit to India at mutually convenient dates.

Source: PIB

United States to propose merit-based immigration policy

Why in news?

☞ US President Donald Trump announced a new proposal **to harden border security and overhaul the legal immigration system** to give preference to foreigners based on merit rather than family ties.

☞ The decision could largely benefit thousands of **Indian professionals,** who end up waiting for long to get the Green Card. Trump will present an overview of the plan, with details of a large document to be released in the coming weeks.

Highlights

- The new plan involves revamping of the legal permanent residency system of the United States, enabling people with merit, higher degrees and professional qualifications to get easy access to the nation's immigration system.
- Under the new proposal, the legal immigration system will favor applicants who speak English, are well-educated and have job offers.
- Currently, 66 per cent of the green cards are given to those with family ties and only 12 per cent are based on skills.
- The new proposal also includes hardening the US border security by building more portions of the southern border wall and improvement in the inspection of goods and people at ports of entry to fight drug smuggling.
- It would also include an increase in fees collected at the border to pay for border security infrastructure.

Impact

- The decision would help keep legal immigration in the United States steady at around 1.1 million people a year, out of which family-based immigration would account for only a third of that.
- In their place, **high-skilled people with jobs or job offers would be given priority.**
- They would be allowed to bring their immediate family such as wife and children along with them.
- By giving preference to migrants more proficient in English or who have degrees or high skill training and job offers, the measure would enable 57 percent of the green cards, which grant permanent legal residency, to be based on employment.

Positives

- The new proposal, largely a product of senior advisers Jared Kushner and Stephen Miller and economic aide Kevin Hassett, has reportedly been formed after studying the legal immigration systems of other nations such as Canada, Australia, Japan and New Zealand.
- The study of the immigration systems of other nations revealed that 12 percent of migration to the United States was based on skill and employment, while it was 63 percent in Canada, 57 percent in New Zealand, 68 percent in Australia and 52 percent in Japan.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

23

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

Negatives

- The new policy does not address key issues such as the large influx of people crossing over from the US's southern border from Mexico.
- It also does not deal with the issue of children of immigrants, who are in the country illegally or immigrants under the Temporary Protected status.

Way Ahead

- The United States immigration laws have given priority to family-based immigration for over decades. Around two-thirds of migrants are granted green cards each year based on their family ties in the nation.
- Hence, this new immigration proposal is an effort to bring together the Republicans on the issue, which has largely contributed to dividing them.
- The policy comes at a time when the US presidential elections are just a year away and immigration is likely to be a key issue during the presidential campaigns.

Source: Indian Express

India joins global initiative to combat online extremism

Why in news?

☞ India has recently joined a major global initiative *'Christchurch call to action'* to combat terrorism and extremism online; and make internet a safe and secure place to be.

Key facts

- The initiative was launched during the *"Online Extremism Summit"* in Paris jointly by India, France, New Zealand, Canada and several other countries with an aim to prevent the abuse of the internet.
- The launch event was attended by several officials and world leaders including from India. India was represented by Ajay Prakash Sawhney, Secretary to Union Government.
- A total of 18 countries including the European Union supported the initiative along with social media giants like Twitter, Facebook, Google and Microsoft.
- Soon after the launch, Facebook announced that it had intensified live streaming rules and will in future ban Facebook Live users who ever shared terrorist or extremist content online.
- The USA has declined to be a part of the initiative as of now. The White House claimed that it supports the Christchurch initiative, however, it is not in a position to join it officially, citing the need for freedom of speech

Highlights of 'Christchurch call to action' declaration

- The initiative outlines collective and voluntary commitments from governments and online service providers to address the issue of terrorist and violent extremist content online.
- It calls for a free, open and secure internet to promote connectivity, enhance social inclusiveness and foster economic growth.
- As internet is not resistant towards the abuse by terrorists and violent extremists, there is an urgent need of collective efforts to secure the internet from such terror groups.
- This statement was supported with a special mention of Christchurch terror attacks which were broadcasted online by terrorists.
- The broadcasting of such content online has severe impact on victims of such incident, on collective security and on people across the world.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

24

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

♦ The Christchurch attack stressed on the urgent call of action by the governments, civil society, online service providers, and social media companies to eliminate terrorist and extremist content online.

Background

♦ The 'Christchurch call to action' initiative has been named after the New Zealand city Christchurch, where over 50 people were killed and over 20 got injured in shootings at two mosques.

♦ Australian citizen Brenton Tarrant of late 20s age was charged with the murder for carrying out the attacks.

♦ Tarrant live streamed one of the attacks himself while attacking the Christchurch mosque in a Facebook Live video.

Source: Economic Times

IMF bails out cash-strapped Pakistan with new loan

Why in news?

☞ Following months of negotiations, Pakistan and the International Monetary Fund have reached an agreement, wherein the IMF has agreed to provide the cash-strapped nation with bailout fund worth $6 billion.

☞ The agreement is Pakistan's 22nd bailout with the IMF, as the country struggles to deal with its falling economy, triggered by low growth, soaring inflation and mounting debt.

Highlights

♦ Pakistan's finance advisor Abdul Hafeez Sheikh announced that the nation has a $12 billion gap in its annual payments and it doesn't have the capacity to pay them. Sheikh made the announcement while announcing the new agreement with the IMF.

♦ Thus, under the new loan deal, Pakistan will receive $6 billion from the IMF in addition to $2 to $3 billion from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank over the next three years.

♦ The agreement comes weeks after former World Bank official Sheikh was appointed as Pakistan's adviser on finance, following the sudden resignation of Pakistan's Finance Minister Asad Umar.

♦ The loan deal aims to support Pakistan's strategy to enable a more balanced growth by reducing the internal and external imbalances, improving the business environment, increasing transparency, strengthening institutions and protecting social spending.

What is the reason for taking this bailout package?

♦ The country is facing a huge financial crunch after the United States cut $300 million worth military aid to the nation.

♦ Pakistan is also facing possible sanctions from the Financial Action Task Force, an anti money-laundering monitor based in Paris, for failing to control terror financing.

♦ The organization is expected to soon take a decision on whether to add Pakistan to a blacklist. If initiated, the move would trigger automatic sanctions, which would further weaken Pakistan's economy.

What Lies Ahead?

♦ Since Pakistan joined the IMF in 1950, the nation has had 21 bailouts, with the last one worth $6.6 billion being issued in 2013.

♦ In international bailout efforts, the UAE, which is Pakistan's largest trading partner in the Middle East, recently offered $3 billion to support the nation's dwindling economy.

♦ Saudi Arabia also pledged $6 billion in funding and entered a 12-month deal with the nation during Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to the kingdom in October 2018.

♦ However, the gulf funding has failed to reverse the economic situation of the nation, as high fuel prices, low tax yields and rising inflation continue to stall its growth. *(Source: The Hindu, Indian Express)*

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

25

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

ELITE IAS

(A Unit of Elite Academy for Education & Training Pvt. Ltd.)

June – 2019

India hosts two-day WTO ministerial meeting

Why in news?

☞ India recently hosted a two-day ministerial meeting of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) from May 13-14, 2019 in New Delhi. Ministers from 16 developing nations and six least developed nations attended the meeting.

☞ The issues that were discussed during these two days include deadlock on the appointment of WTO's appellate body members and the way forward on reforms at the global trade body.

Highlights

◆ During the meeting, the developing countries and the LDCs were given an opportunity to build consensus on the way forward regarding the WTO reforms, while preserving the fundamentals of the multilateral trading system enshrined in the WTO.

◆ The discussions primarily focused on getting a direction on how to constructively engage on issues in the WTO, both institutional and negotiating, in the run-up to the Twelfth Ministerial Conference of the WTO to be held in Kazakhstan in June 2020.

◆ The participants included Bangladesh, China, Malaysia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Malawi, Brazil, Guatemala, Barbados, Argentina, Benin, Chad, Guyana, Egypt, Jamaica, Central African Republic, Nigeria, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Uganda, Turkey and South Africa.

◆ All the participants together aimed to build consensus on how to move forward on the WTO reforms, while preserving the fundamentals of the multilateral trading system.

Rationale behind the move

◆ There have been increasing unilateral measures and counter measures by members in recent past and standoffs in key areas of negotiations and appointments in the appellate body that threaten to dismantle the dispute settlement mechanism of the WTO and impact the position of the trade body as an effective multilateral organization.

◆ The stand offs and deadlocks have given rise to demands from various quarters to reform the WTO.

◆ The meeting aimed to bring together developing nations and the least developed nations on a common platform to share their concerns on various issues affecting the trade organization and work together to address these issues.

◆ It was held at a time when the multilateral rules-based trading system is facing serious and grave challenges.

What is the issue with WTO reforms and way ahead?

◆ It is often argued that the reforms being promoted in the World Trade Organization (WTO) are not in favour of the developing countries.

◆ The situation in the WTO has spurred a strong discourse for reforming the WTO, which, unfortunately, is characterized by a complete lack of balance.

◆ The reform initiatives must promote inclusiveness and non-discrimination, build trust and address the inequalities and glaring asymmetries in existing agreements.

◆ These asymmetries are against the interest of developing countries including LDCs [least developed countries].

◆ There is a need to work together to put issues of importance for developing countries and their priorities in the reform agenda.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

26

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

♦ India believes that developing countries need to work together to protect their interests in the WTO negotiations through preservation of the core fundamental principles of the WTO

Source: The Hindu, Live Mint

Nuclear Test Ban Body CTBT Offers India Observer Status

Why in news?

☞ India's growing influence at international level can be understood from this point that the *Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO)* has recently invited India to become an 'observer' in its meetings.

What are the key benefits?

♦ *India will get rights to data* from the International Monitoring System - IMS, also to a network that includes 337 facilities (*321 monitoring stations and 16 radionuclide labs*) located in 89 countries.

♦ This is an advance system that can be detected even small nuclear explosions using seismology, hydro-acoustics, and infrasound and radionuclide technology.

♦ India will be able to access information of its neighbouring countries and their nuclear initiatives.

About CTBT

♦ The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is an international treaty that is *banning all nuclear explosions - everywhere, by everyone.*

♦ The Treaty was negotiated at the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. It opened for signature on 24 September 1996.

♦ Since then *182 countries have signed the Treaty*.

♦ Last country to do so was Trinidad and Tobago on 8 October 2009 which also ratified the Treaty on 26 May 2010.

♦ Total *154 countries have ratified the Treaty* – most recently Ghana on 14 June 2011.

What is the Difference between Sign and Ratify CTBT

♦ **Signature:** The signature to a treaty indicates that the country accepts the treaty. It commits not to take any actions that would undermine the treaty's purposes. A treaty is signed by a senior representative of a country such as the president or the foreign minister.

♦ **Ratification:** The ratification symbolizes the official sanction of a treaty to make it legally binding for the government of a country. This process involves the treaty's adoption by the legislature of a country such as the parliament.

What is the significance of CTBT?

♦ It is believed that CTBT is the last barrier on the way to develop nuclear weapons.

♦ It curbs the development of new nuclear weapons and the improvement of existing nuclear weapon designs. When the Treaty enters into force it provides a legally binding norm against nuclear testing.

♦ The Treaty also helps prevent human suffering and environmental damages caused by nuclear testing.

Source: The Hindu, Business Standard

US, France, Japan and Australia hold first naval drill in Asia

Why in news?

- The warships from the United States, France, Japan and Australia recently conducted their first-ever combined naval exercise in Asia.
- The new show of force by the US and its allies in the Bay of Bengal comes as the trade war picks up pace between the United States and China. The move could be aimed at undermining China's growing power in the region.

Key Highlights

- The United States was represented by its guided-missile destroyer, USS William P Lawrence, while France was represented by its aircraft carrier, FS Charles de Gaulle and its escorts.
- The two naval ships were joined by four other naval vessels including a helicopter carrier from Japan and a submarine from Australia.
- The naval vessels practiced formation sailing, live fire drills and search and rescue exercises.
- The Japanese helicopter carrier, Izumo and the US destroyer, had joined vessels from India and the Philippines last week for exercises in the South China Sea, most of which is claimed by China.

Significance

- The United States and Japan have been looking to strengthen their defence ties with other nations in the Asia-Pacific region and nations like France and Britain to counter China's increasing influence in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The South China Sea is strategically extremely significant for the region, as it facilitates the flow of a third of the world's maritime trade.
- Recently, two US warships sailed near the islands in the South China Sea, prompting a protest from China that claims almost all of the South China Sea.
- China's claim to the sea is opposed by other nations in the region including Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam and Brunei, which have competing claims to parts of the sea.

    The United States, Japan, France and Australia do not have any territorial claims in the region.

Source: The Hindu

India helps Mongolia build its first refinery

Why in news?

- India has recently extended USD 1 billion Line of Credit to Mongolia to set up its first-ever petrochemical refinery at Sainshand in Dornogobi Province.
- The line of credit will be implemented with Exim Bank funding. It is the largest project undertaken by India under its Lines of Credit programme.

Highlights

- The work on petrochemical refinery officially began in June 2018 during the visit of the then Union Home Minister Rajnath Singh to Mongolia.
- The refinery will be built at the cost of around USD 1.25 billion, of which, USD 1 billion will be provided by India as a line of credit.
- The capacity of the refinery will be 1.5 million metric tons per annum.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

28

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

- Diesel and gasoline will be the primary products of the refinery, while the Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), fuel oil and jet fuel will be produced as secondary products. These products could also be sold to China.
- It is expected to be completed by 2022.

Significance

- Mongolia has ample of oil fields that produce enough crude for its requirements.
- Yet, the country imports all of its finished petrochemical products and exports almost all of its crude oil due to no refinery in the country.
- Once completed, the refinery will significantly reduce Mongolia's import dependence and will ensure energy security.
- This first petrochemical refinery will also cut country's dependence on Russian fuel to some extent.

India-Mongolia relations

- India established diplomatic relations with Mongolia in December 1955, becoming the first non-Soviet Union country to establish such ties.
- Lately, both the countries have strengthened their relations through mechanisms like 'India-Mongolia Joint Working Group for Defence' and 'India-Mongolia Joint Committee on Cooperation (IMJCC)'.
- India, meanwhile, has played a key role in developing Mongolia's human resource potential setting up institutions of religious study, information technology and skill development.
- Stronger ties have also emerged in defence and cyber-security sector with both nations agreeing on the major challenges before them.

Source: PIB, The Hindu

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

29

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

Indian Economy and Economic Development

RBI's Second Bi-monthly Monetary Policy Statement 2019-20

Why in news?

☞ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently released the Second Bi-monthly Monetary Policy Statement 2019-20 after assessing the current and evolving macroeconomic situation in the economy.

☞ In its bi-monthly policy, the six members **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), led by RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das**, decided the following:

☞ Reduce the policy Repo Rate under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) to **5.75 percent** from 6 percent

☞ The Reverse Repo Rate under the LAF stands adjusted to **5.50 percent**

☞ The Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) rate and the Bank Rate stand at **6 percent**

☞ The monetary policy stance changed from *neutral to accommodative*.

☞ The decision of the MPC was consistent with the monetary policy in consonance with the objective of achieving the medium-term target for Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation of 4 percent within a band of +/- 2 percent.

Note: *This was third rate cut in a row by the central bank.*

Other decisions of the Monetary Policy Committee are as under:

◆ RBI **revises GDP growth for year 2020 downwards to 7 percent** from 7.2 percent projected earlier

◆ The Bank expects GDP growth of 6.4-6.7 percent in the first half of FY20 and 7.2-7.5 percent in the second half of the fiscal year

◆ The **CPI Inflation forecast for first half of the FY20 has been revised upwards to 3-3.1 percent** and to 3.4-3.7 percent for the second half of FY20

◆ Minimum Liquidity Ratio for Domestic Systemically Important Banks (DSIBs) to be 4 percent. For other banks, Minimum Liquidity Ratio shall be 3.5 percent

◆ RBI to consider 'on tap' licensing of Small Finance Banks

◆ A '**Working Group**' will be set up to review regulatory guidelines for currency in circulation (CICs)

◆ An **'Internal Working Group'** will be constituted to review liquidity management framework

What is Repo Rate and Reverse Repo Rate?

◆ Repo rate is the rate at which all the banks borrow funds from the Reserve Bank of India.

◆ Reverse Repo Rate is the rate at which banks park their funds with the RBI.

What is monetary policy of RBI?

◆ Monetary policy is the process by which the monetary authority of a country, generally the central bank, controls the supply of money in the economy by its control over interest rates in order to maintain price stability and achieve high economic growth. In India, the central monetary authority is the Reserve Bank of India (RBI). It is designed to maintain the price stability in the economy.

Other objectives of the monetary policy of India, as stated by RBI, are as under:

◆ Price Stability
  ▪ Price Stability implies promoting economic development with considerable emphasis on price stability. The centre of focus is to facilitate the environment which is favorable to the architecture that enables the developmental projects to run swiftly while also maintaining reasonable price stability.

- ◆ Controlled Expansion of Bank Credit
  - ▪ One of the important functions of RBI is the controlled expansion of bank credit and money supply with special attention to seasonal requirement for credit without affecting the output.
- ◆ Promotion of Fixed Investment
  - ▪ The aim here is to increase the productivity of investment by restraining non essential fixed investment.
- ◆ Restriction of Inventories and stocks
  - ▪ Overfilling of stocks and products becoming outdated due to excess of stock often results in sickness of the unit. To avoid this problem, the central monetary authority carries out this essential function of restricting the inventories. The main objective of this policy is to avoid over-stocking and idle money in the organisation.
- ◆ To Promote Efficiency
  - ▪ It is another essential aspect where the central banks pay a lot of attention. It tries to increase the efficiency in the financial system and tries to incorporate structural changes such as deregulating interest rates, easing operational constraints in the credit delivery system, introducing new money market instruments, etc.
- ◆ Reducing the Rigidity
  - ▪ RBI tries to bring about flexibilities in operations which provide a considerable autonomy. It encourages more competitive environment and diversification. It maintains its control over financial system whenever and wherever necessary to maintain the discipline and prudence in operations of the financial system.

Source: The Hindu

RBI removes charges on RTGS & NEFT

Why in news?

☞ Them Reserve Bank of India has recently done away with the charges levied on fund transfers through RTGS and NEFT. The central has also asked the banks to pass on the benefits to customers, a move that will boost digital transactions. The decision was announced by the RBI as part of its measures to **deepen and broaden the financial markets.**

Key facts

- ◆ At present, RBI levies minimum charges on banks for RTGS and NEFT transactions of fund transfers and Banks in turn levy charges on their customers for the same.
- ◆ While doing away with the charges, RBI instructed the Banks to pass these benefits onto their customers.

The central bank will issue the guidelines and instructions in this regard for banks soon.

- ◆ *Banks charge Re 1 to Rs 5 for transfer of funds through NEFT, and Rs 5 to Rs 50 through RTGS, depending on the quantum of the transaction.*
- ◆ *The banks would now either reduce these charges down substantially or could even make it completely free.*

Recommendation by the Nandan Nilekani committee

- ◆ The decision comes after the Nandan Nilekani-led **Committee on Digital Payments** gave out a few suggestions lately to promote digital payments in India.
- ◆ Nilekani panel suggested to do away with the RTGS and NEFT facilities and also recommended that these facilities should be available 24x7.
- ◆ The Committee also recommended duty free import of point of sales machines.

What are RTGS and NEFT?

- RTGS and NEFT are the routes used for transfer of funds online through mobile banking or internet banking.
- These are the electronic payment methods that allow transfer of funds among different banks. Both the systems are maintained by the RBI and are used within India.
- **RTGS stands for Real Time Gross Settlement.** The RTGS is used for instantaneous fund transfers of large-value. It is a continuous and real-time settlement of fund transfers done individually on an order by order basis. The RTGS transactions are processed continuously throughout the RTGS business hours.
- On the other hand, **NEFT stands for 'National Electronic Funds Transfer'.** The NEFT System is used for transferring funds up to Rs 2 lakh. The NEFT operates in hourly batches, that is, the settlement of transfer of funds takes place on hourly basis.

Committee set up to review ATM charges

- RBI has also decided to set up a committee to review the charges levied on the use of Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) by the public.
- The RBI has been receiving persistent demands to change the ATM charges and fees. The central bank also observed that the usage of ATMs has grown significantly in India.
- Considering these, the RBI decided to set up a committee that will involve all stakeholders under the Chairmanship of the Chief Executive Officer of the Indian Banks' Association (IBA) to examine the present system of ATM usage and the charges levied.
- The RBI will issue the composition and terms of reference of the committee soon. The Committee will submit its recommendations within two months of its first meeting.

Source: Economic Times

RBI releases vision document for e-payment system

Why in news?

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently released 'Payment *and Settlement Systems in India: Vision 2019 – 2021'*, a vision document for safe, secure, quick and affordable e-payment system.
- The document was released after considering that the numbers of digital transactions are expected to increase over four times to 8707 crore by December 2021.

Theme

- The core theme of the vision document is *'Empowering Exceptional (E) payment Experience'*, that stresses on empowering every Indian to access a bunch of e-payment options safely and conveniently.

Objective

- The vision document aims to achieve "a 'highly digital' and 'cash-lite' society through Goal Posts (4Cs):
  - Competition
  - Cost effectiveness
  - Convenience
  - Confidence
- **Apart from this, the Payment Systems Vision 2021 document concentrates on two-pronged approach of providing exceptional customer experience and enabling an eco-system in this regard by:**

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

32

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

(a) Boosting customer experience with robust grievance redressal
(b) Empowering e-payment service providers
(c) Enabling eco-system and infrastructure for the e-payment system
(d) Putting down forward-looking regulations
(e) Undertaking Risk-focused Supervision

Highlights

♦ The Payment Systems Vision 2021 states 36 specific action points and 12 specific outcomes.
♦ The document deliberates on boosting customer awareness, setting up a 24X7 helpline and self-regulatory organisation for e-payment service providers.
♦ The main agenda of the vision document is the 'no-compromise' approach towards safety and security of payment systems.

Expected Outcomes

♦ Decline in the share of paper-based clearing in retail payments
♦ Growth in individual retail electronic payment system
♦ Digital payment transaction turn over in terms of GDP is expected to increase to 10.37 in 2019, 12.29 in 2020 and 14.80 in 2021
♦ Rise in use of digital payment modes for purchasing goods and services
♦ Shift from Cash on Delivery (CoD) transactions to digital modes in e-commerce segment
♦ Further facilitation of mobile based payment transactions
♦ Reduction in the marginal cost
♦ Enhanced security of payment systems
♦ Healthy competition in the payments space

The Way Ahead

♦ The RBI will implement the approach highlighted in the Vision document during the period 2019 - 2021.
♦ RBI's efforts will focus towards facilitating the operation of efficient and price-attractive payment systems.
♦ The e-payment world is expected to evolve with further innovation in this system. With entry of more players in this line, customers will get benefit of optimal cost and freer access to several payment system options.

Source: Live Mint, Business Standard

Government to introduce artificial intelligence system in MCA 21 portal

Why in news?

☞ The Union Corporate Affairs Ministry plans to introduce artificial intelligence system in the MCA 21 portal in order to make the compliance process easier as well as to ensure routine enforcement activities are done regularly on autopilot basis.

What is MCA 21?

♦ The portal is the electronic backbone for distribution of information to all the concerned stakeholders, including the regulator, corporates and investors.

♦ All the filings under the company's law are submitted to the ministry through this portal.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

33

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

ELITE IAS

(A Unit of Elite Academy for Education & Training Pvt. Ltd.)

June – 2019

Highlights

- The Ministry plans to introduce Artificial Intelligence in the MCA 21 portal when its version 3 is rolled out within a year.

- The main focus of the Ministry will be to rationalise all the forms and follow the principle of a single source of truth so that one is not required to fill in the known details again, as it will get filled automatically.

- The Ministry will also aim to interlink databases so that routine enforcement is done 24x7 on autopilot basis.

- MCA 21 allows electronic filings of various documents under the Companies Act, 2013 and has fully automated all processes related to enforcement and compliance monitoring under the Act.

Background

- The Union Ministry sought applications from service providers earlier in 2019 to develop as well as operate the upgraded version of MCA 21 system.

- The MCA 21 system was started in 2006. The first phase of the e-governance initiative of the ministry was implemented by Tata Consultancy Services and the second phase is being implemented by Infosys for the period from January 2013-July 2021.

What is the significance?

- The MCA 21 is one of 31 Mission Mode Projects (MMP) of National e-Governance Plan (NeGP) of Government of India. This is first Mission Mode Project to be launched under NeGP and is e-governance initiative from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs to meet the needs of the stakeholder in the 21st century.

- The importance of the portal is that it is the electronic backbone of MCA for distribution of information to all its concerned stakeholders, including the regulators and corporates and investors. It protects investors and also offers many important services to stakeholders.

Source: Economic Times

NABARD announces Rs 700-crore venture capital fund for rural agricultural start-ups

Why in news?

☞ India's National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) has recently announced for Rs. 700 crore project funds for equity investments in agriculture and rural start-ups.

Key facts

- NABARD used to contribute to other funds but it is for the first time when NABARD launched its own funds.

- With this initiative NABARD will assist those start-ups who are engaged in agriculture and rural areas' development.

Highlights

- NABARD believe that these funds will provide a boost to investment ecosystem in the core areas of agriculture, food and improvement of rural livelihoods.

- Till date, NABARD has already contributed Rs 273 crore to 16 alternate investment funds.

- NABARD is now 100 per cent owned by the government, which has been focusing on start-ups through a slew of measures.

What are the benefits?

- **Rural economy**: It will help to boost rural economy. When rural start-ups will get some funds and work for benefit of villages, it will automatically improvise rural financial condition.
- **Employment generation:** Biggest issue of villages is lack of employment opportunities. When NABARD will fund some companies it will generate employment as well as new market to the country.
- **Mitigate migration:** It is quite possible if rural population will get employment and better infrastructure in their own area.

NABARD

- National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) is an apex development financial institution for rural development in India.
- It's headquarter is located at Mumbai while regional offices are present across India.
- NABARD was established on the recommendations of B.Sivaraman Committee, (by Act 61, 1981 of Parliament) on 12 July 1982 to implement the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development Act 1981.
- NABARD is the most important institution in the country which looks after the development of the cottage, small scale, village and other rural industries in the country.

Source: Economic Times, Live Mint

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

35

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

Environment and Ecology

International Day for Biological Diversity

Why in news?

☞ United Nations (UN) has adopted May 22 as The International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues. Objective of observing this day is to spread awareness about species turning endangered or going to extinct. **Year 2019 theme is - "Our Biodiversity, Our Food, Our Health."**

About 2019 International Day for Biological Diversity

◆ Celebrations of this year's IDB focus on biodiversity as the foundation for our food and health and a key catalyst to transforming food systems and improving human health.

◆ It aims to influence knowledge and spread awareness of the dependency of our food systems, nutrition, and health on biodiversity and healthy ecosystems.

◆ Other focus areas of this years' theme are - diversity provided by our natural systems for human existence and well-being on Earth, while contributing to other Sustainable Development Goals, including climate change mitigation and adaptation, ecosystems restoration, cleaner water and zero hunger, among others.

Background

◆ First Biological Diversity International Day was observed by Second Committee of the UN General Assembly on December 29, 1993.

◆ Few years later in year 2000, UN General Assembly adopted 22 May as International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB).

Source: The Hindu

UNEP Report on Sand mining

Why in news?

☞ United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has recently released a report on sand mining and its consumption. The report published with title - *Sand and sustainability: Finding new solutions for environmental governance of global sand resources*.

Key facts

◆ It emphasises on the changing pattern of sand consumption, demand and role in growing population.

◆ UNEP report on sand resources indicates that global demand for sand and gravel is at 40 to 50 billion tonnes per year.

◆ It also highlights the issues caused by illegal sand mining from rivers such as flooding, rising level of pollution, lowering of water aquifers and worse drought occurrences.

Findings of report

◆ Report informs that sand and gravel are the second largest natural resources extracted after water but least regulated.

◆ UNEP declares it one of the major sustainability challenges of the century.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

36

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

- A growing trend of irresponsible and illegal extraction in marine, coastal and freshwater ecosystems makes this a sustainability challenge of significant proportions.
- China and India head the list of critical hotspots for sand extraction impacts in rivers, lakes and on coastlines, most likely because these countries also lead globally on infrastructure and construction.
- Report explores that ecological damage has been witnessed due to large sand mining as it breaks the natural system. Hydro-electricity production or irrigation is reducing the amount of sediment flowing downstream.
- There is no global monitoring or reporting for sand. However, countries are reporting their cement production.

India Specific Findings

- Two thirds of global cement production occurs in China (58.5%) and India (6.6%), as per United States Geological Survey.
- China stands out for aggregates production at 14.3 tonnes/capita per year. In total, China, India and Asia represent 67% of global aggregates production.
- Social and environmental impacts have been reported in India, China, and other locations across Asia, Africa and South America.
- Permeable pavements are used in cities around the world, particularly in new cities projects in China and India to reduce surface water runoff volumes and rates by allowing water to infiltrate soil rapidly, helping to reduce flooding while replenishing groundwater reserves.

Remedial measures

- Improving sustainable consumption and production of sand resources does not imply waiting for new global laws or rules to enable international cooperation. A hierarchy of three major strategies emerged that could lay new foundations for improved governance of sand resources in 2019 and thereafter:
- Avoiding unnecessary natural sand consumption in construction;
- Using alternative materials to replace natural sand in construction; and
- Reducing sand extraction impacts with existing standards and best practices.

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the leading global environmental authority that sets the global environmental agenda, promotes the coherent implementation of the environmental dimension of sustainable development within the United Nations system and serves as an authoritative advocate for the global environment. UNEP's work encompasses: assessing global, regional and national environmental conditions and trends; developing international and national environmental instruments and; strengthening institutions for the wise management of the environment.

Source: The Hindu, UNEP

India to Co-chair Consultative Group of GFDRR

Why in news?

☞ Recently, India has been chosen as the Co-chair of the Consultative Group (CG) of Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) for the fiscal year 2020.

Key facts

- The decision was taken unanimously during the meeting of the GFDRR in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting was held on the sidelines of the 6th Session of the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

37

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

- The move came after India expressed its interest to Co-chair the Group during its last meeting in October 2018.
- This will be the first time that India will co-chair the CG meeting of GFDRR. India became a Member of the Consultative Group (CG) of GFDRR in 2015.

What is Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR)?

- The GFDRR is a global partnership that facilitates the developing countries to better understand the natural hazards and climate change and reduce their vulnerability towards them.
- The Facility works on a grant-funding mechanism that supports disaster risk management projects across the globe.
- The funding is managed by the World Bank.
- It provides technical assistance, helps in capacity building and enables analytical work to help vulnerable nations improve resilience and reduce disaster risk.
- The Facility is currently working with over 400 local, national, regional, and international partners.
- GFDRR also works to implement the *"Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction"* by helping countries to integrate disaster risk management and climate change adaptation together towards development strategies and investment programs.

Way Ahead

- The move will enable India to work with the member countries and organisations with an aim to advance the disaster risk reduction agenda during the period it holds the position.
- India will pursue a focused agenda and will take forward the ongoing work streams of GFDRR.
- The "*Disaster Resilient Infrastructure*" (DRI) will be a central theme for India's engagement with the GFDRR partners and stakeholders.

Source: PIB, Business Standard

Rain-loving snake discovered in Mizoram

Why in news?

☞ A group of researchers have unearthed a new 'rain loving' snake species from Mizoram in North-east India. The researchers have named the specie "Smithophis Atemporalis."

Highlights

- The discovery brings focus on the vibrant and largely explored biodiversity of the Northeast, which is facing the threat of extinction.
- The new snake species have been discovered in the Northeastern state of Mizoram.
- The species is reported to be a non-venomous kind and strictly aquatic. The maximum recorded size of the new species is about 655 mm or 2.5 feet.
- As per the findings, the new species is inoffensive in nature and it can be found in various localities of Mizoram. Researchers, however, feel that it may have a wider distribution.
- The species is reported to feed on frogs, lizards and it also lays eggs.
- Locally, the species is referred to as "Ruahlawmrul," a rain-loving snake, as the activity of the snake increases during the rainy season.

What is the significance?

- The finding is significant because such a discovery has been made for the first time after almost 150 years.
- The discovery has not only revealed a new reptile species but also a whole new genus after a gap of 150 years.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

38

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

Background

◆ The discovery is a result of more than six years of collaboration between scientists from leading Indian and international institutes.

◆ With this, the Smithophis species have now been classified into two species, one being Smithophis bicolor, which is found in Khasi and Garo Hills of Meghalaya and the new species Smithophis Atemporalis, which is only known to be found in Meghalaya as of now.

◆ The name Smithophis comes from an eminent British herpetologist, Malcom Aurthur Smith, who is known for his contribution in the taxonomy of Indian reptiles in his authoritative 'Fauna of British India' series.

Source: The Hindu

NGT directs 18 states, 2 UTs to submit action plan on utilization of treated wastewater

Why in news?

☞ The National Green Tribunal recently directed 18 States and 2 Union Territories to submit their respective action plans on utilization of treated wastewater to reduce pressure on the groundwater resources across the country.

☞ The states and UTs were ordered to submit their action plan within 3 months time to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

Key facts

◆ The bench said that the states that have failed to furnish their plans are mere defaulters who are violating the directions of the NGT.

◆ States were directed to submit the plans latest by June 30, 2019, failing which, the tribunal will consider coercive measures, including compensation for loss to the environment.

◆ The green panel noted that so far only 9 states and 5 UTs have submitted their action plan.

◆ The action plan includes establishing a monitoring mechanism for coordination with the local bodies, which will be overseen by the chief secretaries of all the states and UTs.

States, UTs which have not submitted action plan

◆ The states and UTs which have not submitted action plans are Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Dadar & Nagar Haveli, Goa, Jammu & Kashmir, Gujarat, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Punjab, Pondicherry, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand.

National Green Tribunal (NGT)

◆ The National Green Tribunal was established in October 2010 under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010.

◆ The Tribunal was formed for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.

◆ The principal bench of NGT is located in New Delhi.

◆ Its zonal benches are located in Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai; while its circuit benches are in Shimla, Shillong, Jodhpur, and Kochi.

◆ The NGT is composed of a full-time chairperson, judicial members, and expert members.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

39

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

ELITE IAS
(A Unit of Elite Academy for Education & Training Pvt. Ltd.)

June – 2019

- The minimum number of judicial and expert members prescribed is 10 in each category and the maximum number is 20 in each category.
- The first chairperson of the tribunal was Justice Lokeshwar Singh Panta, who was appointed on October 18, 2010 and relinquished the post in 2011 when he was made 'Lokayukta' of Himachal Pradesh.

Source: The Hindu

Government issues drought advisory

Why in news?

☞ The Union Government has issued a drought advisory to states including Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu and asked them to use water wisely as water storage in dams is dropping to a critical level.

☞ The drought advisory is issued to concerned states when the water level in reservoirs is 20 per cent less than the average of live water storage figures of the past 10 years.

Highlights

- Water falls under the state list and the advisory recommends states to use it for drinking purpose only till the dams are replenished.
- The water storage level in 91 major reservoirs across the country is monitored by the Central Water Commission.
- Currently, the total water storage available is 22 per cent of total storage capacity of these reservoirs. The total storage capacity of these 91 reservoirs is 161.993 BCM. The figure was at 24 per cent for the week ending on May 9.
- The situation seems to be grim in western and southern parts of the country.

Water Storage in Western states

- The western parts include Gujarat and Maharashtra. These states have 27 reservoirs, including 10 in Gujarat and 17 in Maharashtra with a total live storage capacity of 31.26 BCM.
- The total live storage available in these reservoirs is 4.10 BCM until May 16, which is 13 per cent of total live storage capacity.
- The storage in 27 reservoirs of these two states during the corresponding period of last year was 18 per cent and average storage of last 10 years was 22 per cent.
- The situation in Marathwada is particulary critical where the water level in 45 major dams has hit an alarmingly low level.

Water Storage in Southern States

- The southern parts include Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- These states have 31 reservoirs, two of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana combined and one individual in Andhra Pradesh and two in Telangana, four in Karnataka, six each in Kerala and Tamil Nadu with a total live storage capacity of 51.59 BCM.
- The total live storage available in these reservoirs is 6.86 BCM, which is 13 per cent of total live storage capacity of these reservoirs.
- The storage during corresponding period of last year was 13 per cent and average storage of last ten years during corresponding period was 16 per cent.

Water Storage in Northern States

- The water storage level has significantly improved in the northern region which includes states such as Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Rajasthan.
- There are six reservoirs in this region having a total live storage capacity of 18.01 BCM.
- The total live storage available in these reservoirs is 8.54 BCM, which is 47 per cent of total live storage capacity of these reservoirs.

Water Storage in Eastern States

- The eastern region includes states such as Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal and Tripura.
- These are 15 reservoirs in this region having a total live storage capacity of 18.83 BCM. The total live storage available in these reservoirs is 5.04 BCM which is 27 per cent of total live storage capacity of these reservoirs.

Conclusion

- With the dip in water level in the dams in the southern and western region, the Centre has decided to issue the drought advisory to the concerned states such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu, requesting them to use water intelligently.

Source: The Times of India

MoU for Plantation of Rudraksh Trees

Why in news?

- To create a greener ecosystem in Ganga Basin National Mission for Clean Ganga has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with HCL Foundation and INTACH.
- Its objective is to undertaking project of Plantation of Rudraksh Trees in Uttarakhand. It is a CSR initiative under Namani Gange Programme.

Highlights

- Project aims at planting *10,000 Rudraksh trees in the Ganga Basin area* in Uttarakhand in association with the local community.
- This project will also address the issue of unemployment as locals will get work in this project.
- Namami Gange Mission project will give inclusive and *sustainable solutions for a cleaner ecosystem* along the stream of 97 towns and 4,465 villages on the Ganga stem.

Rudraksh Tree

- *Elaeocarpus ganitrus or Rudraksh Tree* is a large evergreen tree. It has broad-leaves whose seed is traditionally used for prayer beads in Hinduism and Buddhism.
- Seeds of this tree are known as Rudraksh. It can be produced by several species of Elaeocarpus. But E. Ganitrus is most popular species which is used in the making of organic jewellery or mala.
- Rudraksh tree develops the fruit in three to four years. It is mainly found in Gangetic plain, foothills of Himalyas, Nepal, Indonesia etc.

Namami Gange Mission

- Namami Gange, is an Integrated Conservation Mission, approved as 'Flagship Programme' by the Union Government in June 2014 with budget outlay of Rs.20,000 Crore to accomplish the twin objectives of effective abatement of pollution, conservation and rejuvenation of National River Ganga.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

41

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

Focus areas of Namani Gange Programme are:

◆ Sewerage Treatment Infrastructure
◆ River-Surface Cleaning
◆ Afforestation
◆ Industrial Effluent Monitoring
◆ River-Front Development
◆ Bio-Diversity
◆ Public Awareness
◆ Ganga Gram

What is Corporate Social Responsibility related to Namani Gange Programme?

◆ Activities in the Corporate Social Responsibility Policy as detailed in Schedule VII to the Companies Act, 2013 include activities relating to ensuring environmental sustainability, ecological balance, protection of flora & fauna, animal welfare, agro forestry, conservation of natural resources and maintaining quality of soil, air and water.

GUIDELINES FOR TAKING UP PROJECTS UNDER CSR INITIATIVES RELATED TO NATIONAL MISSION CLEAN GANGA (NMCG)

◆ NMCG will consider and approve only those activities which contribute to cleaning & rejuvenation of Ganga & its tributaries and allied projects as CSR activities under the umbrella of Namami Gange Program.

◆ Corporates may select one or more of these project activities by clicking on the appropriate tab provided on the webpage. Corporates may also pose any other project activities of their choice if such projects contribute to the objectives of the Namami Gange Program.

◆ Project activities may be selected through proper field survey & feedback by engagement with the residents of the area wherein the project is proposed to be executed.

◆ Corporates would develop detailed proposals for the project and activities selected by them for execution based on the surveys in the proposed region/places. These proposals would include interalia nature of activities, scope of work, plan of action, financial outlays, period of activity/date of completion of the project, manpower deployment and other details.

◆ The project proposals should also spell out the involvement of the local authorities and agencies and the NOC required for such projects/activities.

◆ The proposals with clear plan of action would be required to be submitted to the NMCG for approval and go-ahead.

◆ NMCG after appraisal of the proposals will convey approval cum go ahead sanction for execution of or carrying out the proposed projects. Thereafter, the corporate concerned would enter into a *Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)* with NMCG.

Source: PIB, nmcg.nic.in

New snake species found in Odisha

Why in news?

☞ A species of new vine snake have discovered in the eastern part of Odisha. This new species have found after a century because last discovery was made about vine snake in year 1906. Researchers named it *Ahaetulla laudankia* or *Laudankia* vine snake since it was found in the region.

ELITE IAS

June – 2019

(A Unit of Elite Academy for Education & Training Pvt. Ltd.)

- The local name for vine snakes in the eastern State is Laudankia or Laudaka, as the snake resembles dried stems ('danka') of bottle gourd ('lau').

Key Findings

- Scientists took 10 years for completing field and laboratory work to confirm about new species.
- Vine snake is a slender rear-fanged snake with narrow head, and pointed snouts.
- Snake is from Colubridae family, it has three prominent genera – Oxybelis found in American continent, Thelotornis found in Africa and Ahaetull, which is found in India and Southeast Asia.
- Scientists conducted molecular analysis that proved that the earlier samples were related to a unique species. Scientists found it genetically distinct from green vine snakes.
- After reviewing all the literature pertaining to the brown coloured vine snakes from India and after cross-validating with two old collections of brown vine snakes from Rajasthan, the team was convinced it had discovered of a new species.
- Their eyes have pupils that look like horizontal keyholes.

Source: The Hindu

Extinct bird reappeared after evolution

Why in news?

- A study published in zoological journal explained that an extinct bird came back from the dead after a process called '*iterative evolution*' twice. In study done by University of Portsmouth and Natural History Museum, found that on two occasions, separated by tens of thousands of years, a rail species was able to successfully colonise at Aldabra.
- This bird is called *white-throated rail (Dryolimnas cuvieri)* which came from its native home in Madagascar to Seychelle Islands Aldabra atoll. This place is believed safest for birds as it is predators free.

Highlights

- Dryolimnas cuvieri first **disappeared from the Aldabra atoll in the Seychelles 1,36,000 years ago.**
- Since Aldabra is safest place for them, they had lost their ability to flight. Researchers found the last surviving flightless species of bird, a type of rail, in the Indian Ocean came back through a process called "iterative evolution.
- According to the National History Museum, why these birds left their native place from Madagascar, is still unclear. However, factors like overpopulation or lessening food supply may have sparked the mass migration of birds from Madagascar to other places in the world.
- After examining bones of the ancient flightless Aldabra rails, scientists at the University of Portsmouth and the Natural History Museum, found that both species those that existed before and after the flood are Aldabra rails (Dryolimnas cuvieri aldabranus).

Causes of extinction

- Around 1,00,000 years ago, sea levels fell due to an ice age, allowing the island of Aldabra to exist once again.
- The rails, which migrated to other islands including Mauritius and Reunion, also landed on Aldabra. Aldabra, then free of predators, allowed the rail to evolve and become flightless due to the lack of threats on the island.
- Researchers in the study, who published their findings in the Zoological Journal of the Linnean Society, studied the rail's fossils from before and after the flooding event.

◆ They found that the wing bones were in an advanced state of flightlessness, while bones from the ankle showed signs that it was evolving toward flightlessness.

What is iterative evolution?

◆ Iterative evolution is a repeated evolution of similar or parallel structures in the development of the same main line.
◆ There are many examples of iterative evolution in the fossil record, spanning a wide range of groups.
◆ This evolutionary conservatism is probably owing to the overriding morphogenetic control exerted by certain regulatory genes.

Source: Times of India

Plastic Waste included in Basel Convention

Why in news?

☞ Around 180 member countries, except the United States, amended the 1989 Basel Convention to include plastic waste, a decision that aims to protect environment and human health from the damaging effects of harmful chemicals and waste.

Key facts

◆ The decision was taken during the 14th Meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam & Stockholm Conventions under the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) in Geneva, Switzerland.
◆ Around 1,400 representatives deliberated on this pressing environmental issue for 12 days before reaching to the conclusion.
◆ The meeting was held under the theme of "***Clean Planet, Healthy People: Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste***".

Impact of inclusion of Plastic Waste

◆ With this move, the global trade of plastic waste will become more transparent and will be better regulated. It will ensure that the management of plastic waste becomes safer for environment and human health altogether.

Partnership on Plastic Waste

◆ On the same occasion, the member countries established the 'Partnership on Plastic Waste' to organise resources of businesses, governments, and civil society. The partnership will mobilise interests and expertise for assistance in implementing new measures to provide practical support.

What is Basel Convention?

◆ Adopted on March 22, 1989 by the Conference of Plenipotentiaries in Basel, Switzerland, the "Basel Convention on the Control of Trans-boundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal", generally known as the Basel Convention, came into force in 1992.

◆ It is an international treaty that aims to reduce the movement of hazardous waste between the countries.

◆ It particularly focuses on preventing transfer of hazardous waste from developed to less developed countries.

◆ The Convention came as a response to a public outcry in the 1980s after Africa and other developing countries discovered deposits of toxic wastes.

◆ It provides for cooperation between parties, including exchange of information on issues relevant to the implementation of the Convention.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

44

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

Plastic Pollution

- Plastic is a huge environmental and health issue. Plastic Pollution has lately become a major environmental problem of global concern.
- Plastic makes up 10 percent of all of the waste generated in the world.
- Every year, 500 billion plastic bags are used worldwide.
- Over 100 million tonnes of plastic is now found in the oceans, of which, 80 to 90 percent comes from land-based sources.
- At least 8 million tonnes of plastic end up in the oceans every minute.
- 50 percent of the plastic used by humans is single-use or disposable plastic.
- More than 1 million plastic bottles are purchased every minute.
- The Great Pacific Garbage Patch in the North Pacific Ocean alone accounts for 79000 tons of plastic marine debris in the form of 1.8 trillion pieces. This plastic litter is troubling the marine life.

Elimination of Dicofol and Perfluorooctanoic Acid from Stockholm Convention

- During the meeting, two toxic chemical groups, namely Dicofol and Perfluorooctanoic Acid, were eliminated from the Annex A of the Stockholm Convention.
- The Perfluorooctanoic Acid is in use till now in various industrial and domestic applications including non-stick cookware and food processing equipment.
- Signed in 2001, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants is an international environmental treaty that became effective in May 2004.
- The treaty focuses on eliminating or restricting the production and use of persistent organic pollutants.

Phorate and Hexabromocyclododecane added to Annex III of Rotterdam Convention

- The member countries agreed to the addition of pesticide Phorate and the industrial chemical Hexabromocyclododecane to Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention.
- Rotterdam Convention is a multilateral treaty that provides a legally-binding framework for exchange of information and informed decision-making during trade of certain hazardous pesticides and industrial chemicals.

Source: The Hindu

——◻◻◻◻——

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

45

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

Science and Technology, Defense, Health

ISRO missions for next 10 years announced

Why in news?

☞ Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) recently announced for its upcoming mission over next 10 years. Apart from much awaited and ambitious Chadrayaan-2 some other mega missions will be conducted.

☞ Among these seven mega missions ISRO has defined XPoSat and Aditya-L1 missions only. India's second moon mission, Chandrayaan-2, will be flight ready by May end. ISRO has recently announced that the spacecraft will be launched in July 2019.

Highlights

◆ Apart from XPoSat and Aditya-L1 missions, other four undefined missions are Mangalyaan-2, Venus mission, Lunar Polar Exploration and Exoworlds.

◆ The XPoSat, or the X-ray Polarimeter Satellite, is a dedicated mission to study polarisation which is scheduled for launch next year.

◆ Xposat to study cosmic radiation in 2020, Aditya L1 to the Sun in 2021, Mars Orbiter Mission-2 in 2022, Lunar Polar Exploration or Chandrayaan-3 in 2024 and Exoworlds, an exploration outside the solar system in 2028.

◆ Xposat will be a five-year mission, carrying a polarimeter instrument made by Raman Research Institute to measure cosmic radiation. The spacecraft will be placed in a circular 500-700km orbit.

◆ Indian mission would land in South polar region on Moon, which is an unexplored place till date.

◆ Chandrayaan-2 will carry 13 Indian payloads and one passive experiment from NASA.

◆ Chandrayaan-2 costs about '800-crore. It'd orbit around the moon and perform the objectives of remote-sensing the moon.

XPoSat and Aditya-L1

◆ **Xposat** payload was developed by Raman Research Institute. "The spacecraft will carry Polarimeter Instrument in X-rays (POLIX) payload which will study the degree and angle of polarisation of bright X-ray sources in the energy range 5-30 keV. The satellite has a mission life of five years.

◆ **Aditya L1**, the Sun mission, may play a key role in understanding and predicting climate change on Earth.

◆ The payloads will study the solar corona. The launch may happen by mid-2020 and will be placed in 'libration orbit', which is about 1.5 million km from Earth.

ISRO Satellite Centre (ISAC)

◆ U R Rao Satellite Centre (URSC), Bengaluru, formerly known as ISRO Satellite Centre (ISAC) is the lead centre for building satellites and developing associated satellite technologies.

◆ These spacecraft are used for providing applications to various users in the area of Communication, Navigation, Meteorology, Remote Sensing, Space Science and interplanetary explorations.

◆ The Centre is also pursuing advanced technologies for future missions.

Source: The Hindu

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

46

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

Singapore India Maritime Bilateral Exercise - SIMBEX-2019

Why in news?

☞ After completion of naval exercise IMDEX-19, Indian Naval ships INS Kolkata and INS Shakti participated in annual bilateral naval exercise between India and Singapore – SIMBEX-2019.

Key facts

◆ This naval exercise was scheduled from May 16 to May 22, 2019.
◆ Along with INS Kolkata and INS Shakti, Indian long range maritime patrol aircraft Poseidon-8I (P8I) also participated in SIMBEX-19.
◆ On the other side of Singapore, RSN ships Steadfast and Valiant, maritime patrol aircraft Fokker-50 (F-50) and F-16 fighter aircraft participated in the exercise.

What is the objective?

◆ It is aimed to extend the bridges of friendship through cultural, economic and maritime interactions with countries of east and south-east Asia.
◆ SIMBEX-19 will also relieve two month long deployment of INS Kolkata and INS Shakti in South and East China Seas.

Highlights

◆ SIMBEX-19 comprises of various warfare games/trainings, conferences, courtesy calls to dignitaries of RSN navy, sporting events and deck reception onboard INS Kolkata.
◆ Sea exercise was conducted in the South China Sea from May 19 to May 22, 2019.
◆ It included maritime combat exercises like firing on aerial/ surface targets, advanced aerial tracking, coordinated targeting exercises and tactical exercises on surface/ air scenarios.

Background

◆ SIMBEX was started from year 1993; it has grown in tactical and operational complexity.
◆ Over the time it has grown from traditional anti-submarine exercises to more complex maritime exercises such as advanced air defence operations, anti air/ surface practice firings, tactical exercises, etc.
◆ Over the years SIMBEX has stood the test of time in demonstrating the nation's commitment to enhance maritime cooperation between the two navies and bolster bonds of friendship between the two countries.

Source: The Hindu

Radar imaging satellite RISAT-2B Launched

Why in news?

☞ The RISAT-2B satellite was launched with the PSLV-C46 by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

What is RISAT?

◆ Two satellites in RISAT (radar imaging satellite) series have earlier been launched by ISRO.
◆ RISAT-2 was the first one to be launched, in 2009, while RISAT-1, which had got delayed, was launched only in 2012.
◆ RISAT-1 is no longer operational.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

47

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

- After a very long time, ISRO's PSLV rocket was used to launch just one satellite into space.
- In recent times, ISRO has been launching multiple satellites at one go.

What are the key features?

- The RISAT, or radar imaging satellite, is equipped with a sensor known as **'synthetic aperture radar'**, to take "radar images".
- It works much like the flashlights of a camera, which release visible light to illuminate an object and then use the reflected light to create an image.
- The synthetic aperture radar transmits hundreds of radio signals (**microwave pulses**) every second towards the ground.
- It then captures the signals reflected back by the objects, to create a radio image, which can then be used by computers to build a real image.
- The moisture and texture of the object will determine the strength of the microwave signal that gets reflected.
- The strength of the reflected signal will help determine different targets.
- Likewise, the time between the transmitted and reflected signals will help determine the distance to the object.
- Unlike visible light, microwaves have longer wavelength and so will not be susceptible to atmospheric scattering.
- In other words, the very large wavelength radio waves are not obstructed by clouds, dust or other such obstacles in the atmosphere.
- So they produce reliable images during day and night and all seasons.
- The RISAT-2B satellite uses **X-band synthetic aperture radar** for the first time, which was developed indigenously.
- Unlike the C-band that was used by RISAT-1, the X-band allows for higher resolution imagery for target identification and discrimination.
- [C-band and X-band are the designations for a band of frequencies in the microwave radio region of the electromagnetic spectrum.]
- Since it has high resolution, the satellite will be able to detect objects with dimensions of as little as a metre.
- This capacity to study small objects and also movement could be useful for surveillance.

What is the significance?

- RISAT-2B adds to India's capability to observe the earth in all weathers and all conditions.
- It will enhance India's monitoring capabilities for civil and military purposes, which include -
- crop monitoring during the monsoon season
- forestry mapping for forest fires and deforestation
- flood mapping as part of the national disaster management programme
- Given that overcast skies are a constant during monsoon season and times of flood, the ability to penetrate the cloud cover is essential.
- While optical remote sensing that relies on visible light for imaging gets obstructed by clouds, RISAT-2B will not.
- Services of such satellites are in great demand from national security agencies as well.

Source: Indian Express, The Hindu

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

48

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

Nipah Virus Case in Kerala

Why in news?

☞ A youth from Ernakulam district in Kerala has tested positive for the Nipah virus infection (a year after a similar outbreak in Kerala had claimed 17 lives).

What is the Nipah virus infection?

- Cause - The natural host of the Nipah virus are fruit bats of the Pteropodidae family and Pteropous genus, widely found in South and South East Asia.
- However, the actual source of the current infection is not yet known.
- Scientists are currently working on finding the epidemiological link of the outbreak.
- Transmission - The infection is generally transmitted from animals to human beings, mainly from bats and pigs.
- Human-to-human transmission is also possible, and so is transmission from contaminated food.
- Effect - Nipah virus causes a so far incurable infection in human beings, which can sometimes be fatal.
- Patients either show no symptoms of the infection (asymptomatic infections), thereby making it difficult to detect.
- Otherwise, patients develop acute respiratory problems, or encephalitis that often becomes fatal.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) says the infection has been found to be fatal in 40% to 75% of the infected patients.
- There is no treatment available as of now, either for humans or animals, nor any vaccine.

What are the previous incidents of infection?

- Nipah virus infections were first identified in 1999 in Malaysia.
- From then on infections have been detected quite frequently in Bangladesh.
- Kerala - There have been a few incidents of infection in India earlier, apart from the 2018 outbreak in Kerala.
- The 2018 outbreak was confined to two districts of Kerala, Kozhikode and Malappuram.
- Studies have revealed that a particular kind of fruit bat, Pteropus spp, was most likely the source of human infection in 2018.
- Research suggested that this particular strain might have been circulating in the local bat population.
- The newly detected case in Kerala is believed to have actually been a result of intensified preventive and containment efforts after last year's outbreak.
- The increased awareness and vigilance in the community has helped in early detection this time.
- Elsewhere in India - The first outbreak was in 2001 in Siliguri, West Bengal.
- More than 30 people were hospitalised with suspected infection then.
- Another outbreak happened in 2007 in Nadia of West Bengal, with over 30 cases of fever with acute respiratory distress and/or neurological symptoms.
- Notably, five of them turned out to be fatal.

Who are potentially at risk?

- Transmission to 18 contacts last year and the two health-care workers this year has been only through the human-to-human route.
- As of now, the current outbreak is likely localised, like last year's.
- More people showing symptoms are being screened and so are people in physical contact with them.
- Those with exposure to body fluids (saliva, urine, sputum) of infected patients had higher risk for asymptomatic infections, than those who only had physical contact with the infected patients.

What are the measures taken?

♦ The National Institute of Virology (NIV) advised extreme care for healthcare workers and caregivers.

♦ These include providing double gloves, fluid-resistant gown, goggles, face shields, closed shoes and similar other protective gear.

♦ Currently, steps are being taken to prevent the spread of the disease by tracing the contacts, setting up isolation wards and public engagement.

What is the way forward?

♦ Containing the spread of the Nipah virus is important as the mortality rate was 89% last year.

♦ The recurrence of the infection possibly suggests that the virus is in circulation in fruit bats.

♦ Analysing the evolutionary relationships, a study found 99.7-100% similarity between the virus in humans and bats.

♦ The confirmation of the source and the recurrence mean that Kerala must be alert to the possibility of frequent outbreaks.

♦ It is high time that the state takes continuous monitoring and surveillance for the virus in fruit bats.

♦ One reason for the failure in not doing so till now could be the absence of a public health protection agency.

♦ The government has been in the process of formulating it for over 5 years now, to track such infective agents before they strike.

♦ The state should also equip the Institute of Advanced Virology in Thiruvananthapuram to undertake testing of dangerous pathogens.

Source: Indian Express, The Hindu

World No Tobacco Day: 31ˢᵗ may

Why in news?

☞ **World No Tobacco Day** aims to raise awareness on the harmful and deadly effects of tobacco use and second-hand smoke exposure and to discourage the use of tobacco in any form.

☞ The main focus of **World No Tobacco Day 2019** is on **"tobacco and lung health."** The day is observed annually on May 31, 2019 by the World Health Organization (WHO) and its global partners.

Objective

World No Tobacco Day 2019 campaign aims to raise awareness on the:

♦ Risks posed by tobacco smoking and second-hand smoke exposure

♦ Awareness on the particular dangers of tobacco smoking to lung health

♦ Magnitude of death and illness globally from lung diseases caused by tobacco, including chronic respiratory diseases and lung cancer

♦ Emerging evidence on the link between tobacco smoking and tuberculosis deaths

♦ Implications of second-hand exposure for lung health of people across age groups

♦ Importance of lung health to achieving overall health and well-being

♦ Feasible actions and measures that key audiences, including the public and governments, can take to reduce the risks to lung health posed by tobacco.

Harmful effects of tobacco on lung health of people

The exposure to tobacco can affect the health of people's lungs in multiple ways such as:

♦ **Lung cancer:** Tobacco smoking is the primary cause for lung cancer, causing over two-thirds of lung cancer deaths globally. Passive smoking at home or at the workplace also increases the risk of lung cancer.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

50

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

ELITE IAS
(A Unit of Elite Academy for Education & Training Pvt. Ltd.)

June – 2019

- **Chronic respiratory disease:** Tobacco smoking is one of the leading causes of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a condition that results in painful cough and breathing difficulties. The risk of developing the chronic disease is particularly high among individuals who start smoking at a young age, as tobacco smoke significantly slows lung development. Tobacco also aggravates asthma.
- **Reduced Lung growth and function:** Tobacco smoking by pregnant mothers or their exposure to second-hand smoke can cause reduced lung growth and function in their infants. Young children exposed to second-hand smoke are also at the risk of getting asthma, pneumonia and bronchitis and frequent lower respiratory infections. Globally, an estimated 60 000 children die before the age of 5 of lower respiratory infections caused by second-hand smoke.
- **Tuberculosis:** Tobacco smoking can cause Tuberculosis (TB), which damages the lungs and reduces lung function. About one-quarter of the world's population has latent TB, placing them at risk of developing active disease.
- **Air pollution:** Tobacco smoke is also a leading cause of indoor air pollution, as it contains over 7 000 chemicals, 69 of which are known to cause cancer. Though smoke may be invisible and odorless, it can linger in the air for up to five hours.

The way ahead

- The reduction of tobacco usage and passive smoking is one of the most effective ways of improving lung health. However, there is considerably very less awareness among the people regarding the impact of tobacco smoking and second-hand smoke exposure on the health of people's lungs.

Thus, the campaign aims to increase awareness on:
- Negative impact of tobacco on people's lung health, from cancer to chronic respiratory disease
- Fundamental role of lungs in the health and well-being of all people
- No Tobacco campaign will also serve as a call to action, promoting effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption and engaging concerned stakeholders in the fight for tobacco control.

Source: The Hindu

WHO declares excessive gaming a disorder

Why in news?

☞ World Health Organisation (WHO) recently declared excessive mobile, video gaming as a disorder. Various mental and physical illness issues erupt due to excessive gaming.

☞ Games like PUBG, Loot Boxes and Blue Whale have a negative side which health professionals can no longer ignore.

What is gaming disorder?

- As per the WHO, Gaming disorder is defined in the 11th revision of the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-11) as a model of gaming trend characterized by impaired control over gaming, rising priority given to gaming over other activities to the extent that gaming takes precedence over other interests and daily activities, and continuation or escalation of gaming despite the occurrence of negative consequences.

- Gaming disorder is "characterized by a pattern of persistent and recurring gaming behaviour" where a player begins to give priority to gaming over other daily activities and interest to a point where it begins to affect their relationships, work and education. It has caused doctors in India to sit up and take note.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

51

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

- A decision on inclusion of gaming disorder in ICD-11 is based on reviews of available evidence and reflects a consensus of experts from different disciplines and geographical regions that were involved in the process of technical consultations undertaken by WHO in the process of ICD-11 development.

The International Classification of Diseases

- The International Classification of Diseases - ICD is a foundation for recognition of health issues and trends globally and the international standard for reporting diseases and health problems.
- It is used by medical experts around the globe to detect conditions and by researchers to categorize conditions. *(Source: The Hindu)*

DRDO successfully test fires AKASH MK-1S missile

Why in news?

☞ Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully test fired AKASH-MK-1S missile from ITR , Chandipur, Odhisa recently. It is an upgraded version of existing Akash missile with indigenous technology.

☞ Akash MK-1S is a surface to air missile which can neutralize advanced aerial targets. The Akash weapon system has combination of both command guidance and active terminal seeker guidance. Seeker and guidance performance have been consistently established in both the missions.

About AKASH-MK-1S

- It is a surface to air anti-aircraft missile with a strike range of 25 km and capability to carry warhead of 60 kilogram.
- It has a launch weight of 720 kg, a diameter of 35 cm and a length of 5.78 metres.
- It can reach an altitude of 18 km and can be fired from both tracked and wheeled platforms.
- The missile is guided by a phased array fire control radar called 'Rajendra' which is termed as Battery Level Radar (BLR) with a tracking range of about 60 km.
- The Akash-MK-1S is capable of striking down enemy fighter jets and drones very effectively and accurately.
- The Akash surface-to-air missile was designed to intercept enemy aircraft and missiles from a distance of 18 to 30 km.

Other tests by DRDO this month

- Recently, the Indian Navy and the DRDO had successfully test fired from the test range a Man-Portable Anti-tank Guided Missile (MPATGM) which has advanced features like an image infrared radar seeker with integrated avionics.
- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully test fired an indigenously-developed 500 kg class guided bomb on May 25, 2019 from a Sukhoi combat jet at Pokhran in Rajasthan.
- Earlier in this month, Indian Air Force (IAF) had successfully tested BrahMos air version missile from Su-30MKI fighter aircraft.
- The IAF shared information that the launch from the aircraft was smooth and the missile followed the desired trajectory before directly hitting the land target.
- Before that, DRDO tested flight test of ABHYAS – a high-speed expendable aerial target (HEAT) from test range in Chandipur, Odisha. The ABHYAS missile has been designed on an in-line small gas turbine engine and it uses the indigenously developed MEMS-based navigation system.
- DRDO successfully test fired Pinaka guided missile from Pokhran range. Its weapon system is equipped with advanced navigation and control system. *(Source: The Hindu)*

New measurement unit for Kilogram, Kelvin, mole, and ampere redefined

Why in news?

☞ Four out of seven base units of the international system of measurement, kilogram, Kelvin, mole, and ampere, have been redefined and came into effect across the world recently.

Key facts:

◆ The kilogram (kg) is no longer what it is used to be. Its definition has changed. It still means the same amount of mass as before — your body will still weigh the same as before. But the standard used to define a kilogram has changed.

◆ The International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM) had agreed to change the way we measured weight in November 2018, and as of the World Metrology Day on 21st May, the kilogram has shed its 130-year-old definition to be more accurate and consistent.

◆ India's National Physical Laboratory (NPL), India's apex measurement body, adopted the new system and launched a campaign to create awareness among users on how the new kilogram and three other base units will work in the country without affecting their day-to-day works.

◆ The new kilogram (unit of weight) and three other new base units, ampere (electric current), Kelvin (temperature) and mole (amount of substance such as atoms), will now not be based on 'physical artefacts' but on 'constants of nature' (quantum standards).

Background:

◆ Since 1889, a platinum-iridium cylinder called the International Prototype Kilogram or IPK was used as standard for a kg.

◆ This cylinder was locked in a jar in the headquarters of the International Bureau of Weights and Measures in Sèvres, Paris and an exact replica of this, called the National Prototype Kilogram had been in use to the define the Indian standard.

◆ But over the years, scientists have questioned using IPK as metrics for a kilogram because of its limitations.

◆ The accuracy of IPK was always a limitation as even with the added weight of dust particles or loss of atoms here and there could change the entire scenario.

◆ Also, IPK could only be used as a standard under the earth's gravity and not, for instance, on Mars.

◆ Because of these reasons, the resolution to redefine four of the seven base units - the kilogram (SI unit of weight), Kelvin (SI unit of temperature), mole (SI unit of amount of substance), and ampere (SI unit of current), was adopted at the 26th General Conference on Weights & Measures (GCWM), which is comprised of 60 member countries, in November 2018.

What is Plank Constant?

◆ Planck constant is a quality that relates light's particle energy to its frequency. The value of the Planck constant has been accurately measured as 6.626069×10^{-34} kilograms per second per square meter.

◆ As the units of time (seconds) and distance (metres) have already been defined in terms of natural constants, scientists are able to define kilogram precisely from the equation.

◆ A machine called the kibble balance is then used to obtain this practically.

What will change?

- The new SI system, which is defined in terms of Planck's constant, would be stable in the long term and practically realisable.
- The new SI System will be helpful in bringing in accuracy while dealing with international trade, biotechnology, high-tech manufacturing and human health and safety.
- The new definition of kg involves accurate weighing machines called 'Kibble balance', which uses Planck's constant to measure the mass of an object using a precisely measured electromagnetic force.

Source: The Hindu

NITI Aayog proposal for AI push

Why in news?

☞ The National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) proposed a Rs. 7500 crore plan to give a strong push to Artificial Intelligence in India.

Key facts

- This fund will help to create a new cloud platform and to build new research institutes.
- This whole mission will be monitored by a task force. This task force will be headed by a member of NITI Aayog.
- However, representation from all ministries and states, experts will also be there in task force.

Highlights

- NITI Aayog's plan includes investments in 20 ICTAI, 5 CORE, and setting up of AIRAWAT for increasing AI technology in the country.
- High level task force will be set up to monitor implementation.
- Education, healthcare, agriculture, urbanisation and mobility will be the major sectors where artificial intelligence will work.
- According to the NITI Aayog proposal five research centers and 20 AI adoption centres are planned.
- As per the proposal, if implemented, it can add USD 957 billion to India's GDP by year 2035.
- Also, India's annual growth can go up by 1.3% by 2035.

CORE and ICTAI

- International centres for transformational Artificial Intelligence (ICTAI) and Centre of Research Excellence (CORE) are part of the two-tier AI development plan proposed by NITI Aayog in its 2018 discussion paper. It was titled 'National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence'. CORE centres were proposed to focus on pushing technology frontiers through creation of new knowledge. While, the International Centres of Transformational AI (ICTAI) were given a mandate to develop and deploy application-based research.

What is artificial intelligence?

- Artificial intelligence (AI) is the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, especially computer systems. These processes include learning (the acquisition of information and rules for using the information), reasoning (using rules to reach approximate or definite conclusions) and self-correction. Particular applications of AI include expert systems, speech recognition and machine vision.

Source: The Hindu, Economic Times

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

54

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

Vice President calls for protecting Ongole cattle breed

Why in news?

☞ Vice President of India, M. Venkaiah Naidu has called for protecting Ongole cattle breed recently. He released a compendium on Ongole breed of cattle at Vijayawada recently.

Ongole cattle

◆ Ongole cattle is an indigenous cattle breed that originates from Prakasam District in the state of Andhra Pradesh.

◆ The breed derives its name from the place the breed originates from, Ongole.

◆ The Ongole breed of cattle, Bos Indicus, has a great demand as it is said to possess resistance to both foot and mouth disease and mad cow disease.

◆ The Ongole is one of the heaviest breeds. They weigh approximately half a ton, are 1.7 meters in height and have a body length of 1.6 meters and girth measuring 2 meters.

◆ These cattle are commonly used in bull fights in Mexico and some parts of East Africa due to their strength and aggressiveness. They also participate in traditional bull fights in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.

◆ The Ongole is one of the heaviest breeds. They weigh approximately half a ton, are 1.7 meters in height and have a body length of 1.6 meters and girth measuring 2 meters.

◆ Brazil has imported these cattle breeds and produced hybrid Ongoles to earn huge revenue through export. While in India this cattle is neglected.

Indian cattle breeds:

◆ India has 37 pure cattle breeds. Five of these — Sahiwal, Gir, Red Sindhi, Tharparkar and Rathi — are known for their milking prowess.

◆ A few others, such as Kankrej, Ongole and Hariana, belong to dual breeds that have both milch and draught qualities; ie, they are good plough animals. The rest are pure draught breeds.

What is the significance?

◆ Observing that agriculture was facing many challenges, the Vice President stressed the need for multi-pronged efforts from all stakeholders to double the income of farmers by making agriculture sustainable and profitable. He urged farmers to take up backyard poultry and in house dairy for fetching additional income.   *(Source: PIB)*

DRDO successfully conducts flight test of ABHYAS

Why in news?

☞ The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) recently successfully flight tested the ABHYAS, a High-speed Expendable Aerial Target (HEAT). The flight test was conducted from the Interim Test Range, Chandipur, Odisha.

☞ The RADARS and Electro Optic Systems kept the track of the test which proved its performance in fully independent navigation mode.

☞ The test demonstrated the capability of ABHYAS to meet the mission requirement of the defence forces for a cost effective high-speed expendable aerial target.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

55

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in   Visit us: www.eliteias.in

About ABHYAS

- After the *first experimental launch in 2012* at the Chitradurga Aeronautical Test Range, the concept of ABHYAS was proved and the pre-project details were completed on January 2013.
- The ABHYAS project picked up the pace after all the three defence services - Indian Air Force, Indian Army and Indian Navy floated a tender for procurement of 225 HEAT drones.
- The ABHYAS is a drone built by the *Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE)* of the DRDO.
- It can fly autonomously with the help of an autopilot.
- The ABHYAS offers a practical threat scenario for practice of weapon systems.
- ABHYAS configuration is designed on an in-line small gas turbine engine.
- It uses indigenously developed MEMS based Inertial Navigation Systems for its navigation and guidance.
- The drone is used by the defence services for testing different types of missiles including air-to-air missiles and surface to air missiles.

Lakshya drone-based design

- The design of ABHYAS' fuselage is based on the Lakshya, a high speed target drone system developed by the DRDO's Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE). The wings and tail plane of ABHYAS have been derived from the Lakshya by trimming them. *(Source: The Hindu)*

NASA found traces of water on Ultima Thule

Why in news?

- NASA has recently discovered evidences of water, ice and organic molecules on Ultima Thule's surface. NASA has published the first profile of Ultima Thule revealing details about the complex space object.
- On Ultima Thule researchers are investigating on features like bright spots and patches, craters and pits, hills and troughs on it. NASA's New Horizons spacecraft discovered Kuiper Belt object 2014 MU69, nicknamed Ultima Thule early this year.

Ultima Thule

- Ultima Thule is 4 billion miles away from Earth and has captured scientists' curiosity since they discovered it had a snowman-like appearance.
- NASA's New Horizons spacecraft flew past the icy object nicknamed Ultima Thule in Kuiper belt.
- Ultima Thule is deep within the so-called Kuiper Belt, or Twilight Zone, well beyond the orbit of Neptune.
- It is a contact binary, with two distinctly differently shaped lobes. It consists of a large, strangely flat lobe nicknamed "Ultima" connected to a smaller, somewhat rounder lobe dubbed "Thule" at a juncture.
- The lobes likely once orbited each other until some process brought them together in what scientists have shown to be a "gentle" merger.
- The alignment of the axes of Ultima and Thule indicates that before the merger the two lobes must have become tidally locked, meaning that the same sides always faced each other as they orbited around the same point.
- NASA researchers found that Ultima Thule is reddish in colour and is considered to be the reddest outer solar system object ever visited by spacecraft. Researchers believe the organic molecules on the surface have contributed to its vibrant colour.

ELITE IAS

(A Unit of Elite Academy for Education & Training Pvt. Ltd.)

June – 2019

New Horizons

◆ The New Horizons spacecraft is now 4.1 billion miles (6.6 billion kilometers) from Earth, operating normally and speeding deeper into the Kuiper Belt at nearly 33,000 miles (53,000 kilometers) per hour.
◆ New Horizons launched on January 19, 2006 and conducted a six-month-long reconnaissance flyby study of Pluto and its moons in summer 2015.
◆ The goal of the mission is to understand the formation of the Plutonian system, the Kuiper belt, and the transformation of the early Solar System.
◆ The spacecraft collected data on the atmospheres, surfaces, interiors, and environments of Pluto and its moons. It is also studying other objects in the Kuiper belt.　　　　*(Source: The Hindu)*

India delivers a pair of Mi-24 helicopters to Afghanistan

Why in news?

☞ India recently delivered the first pair of Mi-24 attack helicopters to the Afghan Air Force, enabling the country to bolster its capabilities in counter insurgency operations.

Key facts

◆ The helicopters will enhance the efficiency of the Afghan National Defence and Security Force in combating terrorism.
◆ The attack helicopters were handed over by Vinay Kumar, Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan, to Acting Defence Minister Asadullah Khalid at the Kabul Air Force base.
◆ These Mi-24 helicopters were delivered as replacement against four attack helicopters previously gifted by India to Afghanistan in 2015. These helicopters were **purchased by India from Belarus.**
◆ For this purpose, India had signed a Tripartite Agreement to purchase the attack helicopters from Belarus and supply them to Afghanistan. India needs to supply two more such helicopters to Afghanistan.

Mi-24 Helicopter

◆ The Mi-24 helicopter is a large gunship that is used for carrying out assault and transport missions.
◆ It can ferry up to eight people.
◆ It has been called "assault helicopter" because of its dual capabilities of firepower and troop-transport.
◆ The helicopter is produced by the Mil Moscow Helicopter Plant, a Russian designer and producer of helicopters.
◆ It has been in operations since 1972 by the then Soviet Air Force and over 30 other nations.

What is the Significance?

◆ The supply of helicopters to Afghanistan comes at a crucial time when the country has been looking for funds and weapons to sustain its defence forces following the announcement of the United States to withdraw its troops from Afghanistan over the next three to five years.

Source: The Hindu

IAF gets first Apache attack helicopter

Why in news?

☞ The Indian Air Force has received the first Apache Guardian helicopter from US aircraft manufacturer, Boeing.

Key facts

◆ India had signed a multi-billion dollar contract with the US in September 2015, for 22 of these helicopters.
◆ The attack helicopter has been customised to suit Indian Air Force's future requirements and would have significant capability in mountainous terrain.

June – 2019

(A Unit of Elite Academy for Education & Training Pvt. Ltd.)

AH-64E Apache: Key Features

- The main features of the latest variant of the Apache fleet includes improved digital connectivity and powerful engines with upgraded face gear transmission to accommodate more power.
- The helicopter has the capability to control unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), full IFR capability, and improved landing gear.
- It has the capability to carry out precision attacks at standoff ranges and operate in hostile airspace with threats from the ground.
- The helicopter also has the ability to transmit and receive the battlefield picture, to and from the weapon systems through data networking, which makes it a lethal acquisition.
- Further, the helicopter has an oversea capacity and is fit for maritime operations, potentially enabling naval strikes.
- The helicopter will provide a significant edge in any future joint operations in support of land forces.
- A select air and ground crew of the Indian Air Force have undergone training at the training facilities at the US Army base Fort Rucker, Alabama.
- The trained personnel would be given the responsibility to lead the operationalisation of the Apache fleet in the IAF.

Significance

- The AH-64E Apache is primarily a multi-role attack helicopter, which is flown by the US Army. Its addition in the Indian chopper fleet is a significant step towards modernization of the Air Force and boosting its fighting capability.

Background

- The Indian Air Force had signed a contract with US Government and M/s Boeing Ltd in September 2015 for 22 Apache helicopters.
- Apart from this, the Defence Ministry had approved the procurement of six Apache helicopters in 2017 along with weapons systems from Boeing at a cost of Rs 4,168 crore for the Army.
- This will be the Indian Air Force's first fleet of attack choppers.   *(Source: The Hindu)*

Department of Biotechnology launched MANAV: Human Atlas Initiative

Why in news?

☞ Department of Biotechnology (DBT) working under ministry of science and technology has recently launched human tissue mapping project called MANAV: Human Atlas Initiative.

Key facts

- It has been launched to improve understanding on human physiology.
- Objective of this initiative is to map every single tissue of human body to find out deepest information and roles of tissues and cells linked to a variety of ailments.

- This project is funded by Department of Biotechnology (DBT) that would make a database network of all human body tissues. Those students part of this project will be trained and instructed with skills to perform annotation.

Objectives

- Physiological and molecular mapping for better biological insight,
- Develop disease models through predictive computing,
- Major Objective of the initiative is to find out and capture human physiology in two stages – normal stage and disease stage,
- At final stage, overall analysis and medicine discovery.

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

58

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

Highlights

- Department of Biotechnology has issued funds of Rs 13 cr to two institutions in Pune, Indian Institute of Science, Education and Research (IISER) and National Centre for Cell Science (NCCS).
- Also, Persistent Systems has co-funded the project and is developing the platform, and has contributed Rs 7 crore.
- Through physiological and molecular mapping this programme involve in getting better biological insights, develop disease models through predictive computing and have a holistic examination and at last drug discovery.

Who can join MANAV project?

- The project can be signed up by students who are in their final year of graduation and above.
- Students of various streams like biochemistry, systems biologists, pharmacologists, zoology, biotechnology, botany, microbiology, bioinformatics, health sciences, and data sciences can associate with this project.
- Those students can also join who doesn't have science background or not involved in active scientific research.

(*Source: Indian Express*)

11A/22, IInd floor, Bada Bazaar Marg, Near Bikaner Sweets at Gol Chakkar, Old Rajender Nagar, New Delhi – 110060 Mobile no : 7065202020,8899999931/34 Email : info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

59

A-1, Chandra House, Top Floor, Opp. ICICI Bank, Main Road, Mukherjee Nagar, Delhi-110009 Mobile no : 8410000037, 7065202020, 8899999931/34 Email: info@eliteias.in Visit us: www.eliteias.in

More News

Ajit Doval reappointed as National Security Adviser

- India's **National Security Adviser Ajit Doval** has been reappointed to the post for **another five years**. Ajit Doval has also been given *Cabinet Rank* for contribution to national security.

- NSA Ajit Doval's quality of work in his previous term has earned him the Cabinet rank in Modi Government 2.0, as per government sources. Previously, Doval was placed in the Minister of State rank.

- The 1968-batch IPS officer has worked as an intelligence officer for over 33 years during which he served in the North East, Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab. Doval has also done diplomatic assignments in Pakistan and the UK.

Donald Trump becomes first world leader to meet Japan's new Emperor Naruhito

- US President Donald Trump has become the first-ever foreign leader to meet Japan's newly crowned emperor, Emperor Naruhito. The emperor had ascended the throne, followed the abdication by his father, Emperor Akihito. Emperor Akihito became the first Japanese emperor to abdicate his throne since 1817.

Admiral Karambir Singh takes charge as the new Navy Chief

- Admiral Karambir Singh assumed charge of the Indian Navy on May 31, 2019. He is the 24th Chief of the Naval Staff. Before this, Admiral Karambir was appointed as the Chief of Staff, Eastern Naval Command. His other important flag appointments include Chief of Staff of the Tri-Services Unified Command at Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Flag Officer Commanding Maharashtra and Gujarat Naval Area (FOMAG).

Indian writer Annie Zaidi wins Nine Dots Prize 2019-20

- Mumbai based journalist and playwright Annie Zaidi has declared the winner of the Nine Dots Prize-2019 for her essay Bread, Cement, Cactus. She is a freelance writer whose work includes reportage, essays, short stories, poetry and plays, she has been announced as the winner for year 2019-20.

- Annie Zaidi's work, 'Bread, Cement, Cactus', includes reportage and memoir to explore concepts of home and belonging rooted in her experience of contemporary life in India, where migration – within the country, especially from villages to cities – is high. The proposed book will answer the big question through examining how a citizen's sense of 'home' might collapse, or be recovered.

Celestial Bodies' wins Man Booker International Prize 2019

- Oman author Jokha Alharthi won the prestigious 'Man Booker International Prize 2019' for her novel "Celestial Bodies", the novel that confronts Oman's history of slavery, which was abolished in the country only in 1970.

ELITE IAS
(A Unit of Elite Academy for Education & Training Pvt. Ltd.)

June – 2019

Nirbhaya rape case investigator Chhaya Sharma gets McCain Institute award

- Indian Police Service (IPS) and investigation officer of Nirbhaya rape case, Chhaya Sharma was bestowed with the McCain Institute Award 2019. She has worked to protect human rights throughout her career. During investigation of various sensitive criminal cases and protecting human rights, she led various teams in 19 years.

Former SC Justice MB Lokur appointed to Supreme Court of Fiji

- Justice MB Lokur, fomer judge of the Supreme Court, was appointed to the Supreme Court of Fiji's non-resident panel for three years period. Fiji has previously invited judges from various other nations including Sri Lanka, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Malaysia.

Vande Bharat Express completes 1 lakh running kilometers

- 'Vande Bharat Express', also known as 'Train 18', completed 1 lakh running kilometres without missing a single trip. The Train was flagged off on February 15 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during its run from New Delhi to Varanasi. The high speed has been manufactured by the Integral Coach Factory (ICF).

UNDRR confers PM Modi's Secretary with Sasakawa Award

- Dr Pramod Kumar Mishra, Additional Principal Secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was honoured with the 'Sasakawa Award 2019 for Disaster Risk Reduction' by UNDRR. The Sasakawa Award is the most prestigious award of the United Nations in the area of Disaster Risk Management.

Tennis legend Sir Andy Murray receives Knighthood at Buckingham Palace

- Sir Andy Murray received the Knighthood by Prince Charles, Prince of Wales, at an investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace in recognition of his services to tennis and charity. The move comes over 2 years after the Knighthood was announced in the Queen's New Years Honours in 2016.

ICC appoints first female match referee

- Former Indian cricketer, GS Lakshmi has been appointed by the International Cricket Council as the first-ever woman referee on the international panel of match referees.
- With the decision, the 51-year-old will be eligible to officiate in international games with immediate effect.

Women only cricket magazine Criczone launched

- World's first exclusive women's cricket magazine 'Criczone' was recently released in India. Magazine claims that it is the world first magazine which features only women cricketers. First edition of Criczone features Smriti Mandhana as cover story.

UN appoints actress Dia Mirza, Alibaba's Jack Ma as new 'SDG Advocates'

- Indian actress Dia Mirza and Alibaba co-founder Jack Ma have been appointed by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres as the new advocates for the UN's ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- They will be among the new class of 'SDG Advocates', which includes 17 influential public figures including Queen Mathilde of Belgium, Qatari Emir's wife Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, British screenwriter Richard Curtis, Nobel Laureate Nadia Murad, American economist Jeffrey Sachs and Forest Whitaker.

Former SC judge of India appointed as Member of Commonwealth Tribunal

- Justice (Retired) KS Radhakrishnan, a former Supreme Court judge, was on May 8, 2019 appointed as the Member of the Commonwealth Secretariat Arbitral Tribunal of London. He will serve a 4-year term from June 1, 2019 to May 31, 2023 as a Member of the Tribunal.

- The Commonwealth Secretariat Arbitral Tribunal resolves disputes of the Commonwealth organisations, international or intergovernmental.

World Red Cross Day 2019

- The World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day was celebrated across the globe on May 8, 2019 to mark the birth anniversary of Henry Dunant, the founder of the Red Cross and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The theme of the World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day 2019 was 'Love'.

—□□□□—