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## **GENERAL STUDIES-1**

### **INDIAN CULTURE**

#### **ADOPT A HERITAGE SCHEME**

**Implementing ministry:** Ministry of Tourism

#### **Why in news?**

14 companies signed a letter of intent to adopt monuments and will be the future 'Monument Mitras' who would associate pride with their CSR activities.

#### **Adopted Monuments**

1. Jantar Mantar, Delhi.
2. Sun Temple, Konark
3. Raja Rani Temple, Bhubaneswar
4. Ratnagiri Monuments, Jajpur, Odisha
5. Hampi, Karnataka
6. Leh Palace, Jammu & Kashmir
7. Qutub Minar, Delhi
8. Ajanta Caves, Maharashtra
9. Mattancherry Palace Museum, Kochi
10. Safdarjung Tomb, Delhi
11. Gangotri Temple Area and Trail to Gaumukh
12. Mt. Stok Kangri, Laddakh, Jammu and Kashmir
13. Agrasen ki Baoli, Delhi
14. Purana Quila, Delhi.

#### **About the scheme:**

It is also known as Apni Dharohar Apni Pehchan Project

Scheme was launched on World Tourism Day i.e. 27th September, 2017 by Ministry of Tourism in collaboration with Ministry of Culture and Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) which envisages developing monuments, heritage and tourist sites across India and making them tourist friendly.

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Ministry of Tourism invited Private, Public Sector Companies and Corporate individuals to adopt the sites and to take up the responsibility for making our heritage and tourism more sustainable through conservation and development.

**Significance:**

The project primarily focuses on development and maintenance of world-class tourist infrastructure and amenities like Cleanliness, Public Conveniences, Ease of access, secure environment, illumination and night viewing facilities for an overall inclusive tourist experience that will result in more footfall from both domestic and foreign tourists.

**GENERAL STUDIES-2**

## **POLITY AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES AND POLICIES**

### **FIGHTING TB**

India's domestic budget for fighting tuberculosis showed a dramatic jump, according to a report from the World Health Organisation (WHO). Typically most of India's budget to combat the bacterial infection used to be dominated by international funding.

#### **India's TB burden: WHO**

With 1.7 million new cases in 2016, India still continues to be the largest contributor to the global burden with up to a quarter of new cases of TB.

- Funding Source: 74% domestic funding and 26% international funding.
- More men above the age of 15 suffer from TB than women.
- In 2016, India recorded a 12% dip in the number of TB deaths from the previous year though the incidence dipped marginally by 1%.

#### **Government's intervention**

- The government has committed to achieve a '90-90-90 target' by 2035 (90% reductions in incidence, mortality and catastrophic health expenditures due to TB).
- This is premised on improved diagnostics, shorter treatment courses, a better vaccine and comprehensive preventive strategies.

#### **Prevailing issue:**

- TB is still stigmatized and under-reported.
- Top-line drugs are still inadequate to treat people who suffer from the drug-resistant forms of the disease.

#### **MDR-TB**

The bacteria that causes tuberculosis (TB) can develop resistance to the antimicrobial drugs used to cure the disease. Multidrug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) is TB that does not respond to at least isoniazid and rifampicin, the 2 most powerful anti-TB drugs.

## **COMPLICATED TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT**

In October 2017, the Supreme Court read down the marital rape exception for married girls between the ages of 15 and 18. The court held that since sexual assault in marriage is already a crime under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO), it is discriminatory and arbitrary to suspend the protection of the rape law for these underage married girls.

### **The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006**

It prohibits the validation of child marriages wherein a child means a person who if male has not yet completed 21 years, and if female not yet 18 years.

- Every child marriage, whether solemnised before or after the Act came into effect, can be made void by either the man or the woman within two years of attaining majority.
- Karnataka has passed a law making all child marriages void.

### **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act**

- POCSO provides that consent of a child is not a defence to sexual assault. Thus, sexual consent is defined as an adult category. Hence, the argument that marriage presumes consent is not acceptable in the law on sexual assault of children.
- POCSO defines a child, (irrespective of gender) as a person under the age of 18 years. It prevents the “inducement or coercion of a child to engage in any unlawful sexual activity”.
- It mandates the Central and State governments to take all measures to ensure publicity to the provisions of the Act and obliges government officials to be trained in how to implement the Act.
- The brief of any government is to act to secure the best interests of the child since the Indian state acceded in 1992 to the UN General Assembly’s Convention on the Rights of the Child.

### **Prevalence of child marriage**

These are a distinct form of early marriages in which the consent of the patriarch of the family or elder determines the matrimonial fate of the child. Different customary and personal laws have existed, wherein the age at which a girl can be married is lower than the legal age of marriage.

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### **IPC 375 vs POCSO Act**

Till now sexual intercourse with minor wife did not amount to rape if she was over 15 years of age. This was in the Indian Penal code (IPC) as an exception to Section 375 which is the law of the land regarding Rape.

This exception meant that the husband was not charged with Rape even though child marriage is a crime.

This came into conflict with 2012 POCSO (Protection of Children from sexual offences) Act that defines 'children' as those aged below 18. In a landmark judgement, the SC has criminalised the sex with wife aged between 15 and 18 years.

### **A major relief for girl child**

Though child marriage is prohibited, it is not automatically void under India's civil laws. The court criticised the fact that PCMA (Prohibition of Child Marriage Act of 2006) makes child marriage only voidable by placing the burden on the child bride to approach a court to declare her marriage a nullity. She has to do this within two years of attaining majority that is by the time she is 20 years old. If not, the marriage continues.

The judgement is a major relief to the child bride because an unmarried girl child can prosecute her rapist, but a married girl child aged between 15 and 18 could not even do that due to the exception given to the Section 375, IPC.

### **Significance of the judgement**

Traditionalists make an argument for de-criminalisation of compulsory sex within child marriage arranged by elders and dictated by custom. In this context, SC judgement is significant because-

The Supreme Court decision makes it clear that sexual consent can only be given by an adult woman of 18 years. The Supreme Court judgment rightly reversed the position that the jurisdiction of sexual impunity of husbands must lie with customary or personal law through the marital rape law exception.

### **State's argument against SC judgement**

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Marriage presumes consent. Compulsory sex in child marriage is protected by customary or personal law. Husbands of child brides must have impunity from the rape law. Poverty and lack of development means compulsory sex in child marriage must be de-criminalised. However, the Supreme Court set aside these arguments.

### **Consent is individual choice**

The question of sexual consent is clearly one that must lie with the individual woman. The Supreme Court rightly holds that the 'the girl child must not be deprived of her right of choice'.

The right to choose, which is free and unfettered, includes freedom from parental pressure to marry early, freedom from forced marriages, freedom of choice of sexual orientation, and freedom to find self-fulfilment through study, work, profession, vocation or talent. Forcing young persons into compulsory heterosexuality should be seen as a social evil.

### **In Conclusion**

A child remains a child whether she is described as a street child or a surrendered child or an abandoned child or an adopted child. Similarly, a child remains a child whether she is a married child or an unmarried child or a divorced child or a separated or widowed child. Union of India also cannot be unconscious to the existence of the trauma faced by a girl child who is married between 15 and 18 years of age.

### **CENTRES UNDER ALL HIGH COURTS FOR VULNERABLE VICTIMS**

Lauding the Delhi High Court for setting up vulnerable witnesses deposition complexes, the Supreme Court has asked other High Courts in the Country to follow suit in consonance with guidelines postulated in Sakshi v. Union of India. This case pertained to the rape of a deaf, dumb and mentally challenged minor girl.

### **Reason:**

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Victims often end up being ill-treated by the very system they had approached in the hope of justice. Delay and intimidating questions during trial in a hostile environment lead to fewer convictions.

**Guidelines:**

- A screen or some arrangement by which the victim does not see the body or face of the accused.
- Reducing cross-examination questions to writing and handing them over to the judge to be put to the victim in a language that is clear and not embarrassing.
- Sufficient breaks for victims of child abuse or rape while testifying.

**Significance of the order:**

Encourages a vulnerable victim to make a statement. It also upholds the right of vulnerable witnesses to be protected while testifying in court. The order is in consonance with international norms in these matters.

**ATTACKING HIGH COURTS?**

Several commentators have pointed out that the jurisdiction of our 24 High Courts has been subject to relentless attack from Parliament, and, even the Supreme Court.

**Constitutional position of HCs**

For the framers of our Constitution, high courts, occupied a central position. They were conceived as a forum for adjudicating disputes under the Constitution, Central and State statutes before they moved to the Supreme Court; their jurisdiction was more extensive than the Supreme Court's. In contrast to the American model of a bifurcated federal and state judiciary, our high courts resolve all disputes.

*1. Original jurisdiction of High Court*

The Constitution of India does not give a detailed description of the original jurisdiction of the High Court. It is accepted that the original jurisdiction of a High Court is exercised by issue of Writs to any person or authority including Government.

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- Article 226 of the Constitution vests in the High Court the power to issue writs for the restoration of fundamental rights.
- This power of the High Court does not derogate the similar power conferred on the Supreme Court in Article 32 of the Constitution.
- The original jurisdiction of the High Courts also extends to the matters of admiralty, probate, matrimonial and contempt of Court cases.
- The High Courts have also full powers to make rules to regulate their business in relation to the administration of justice. It can punish for its own contempt.

SC has ruled that High Courts' power of judicial review under Article 226 should be invoked only when there is breach of law or violation of the Constitution. This ruling of the Court came in light of a judgment of the Rajasthan High Court, wherein the High Court had taken suo moto cognizance of a breach of security matter at the Sanganer Airport and included the Chief Justices and the Judges of the High Court in the list of persons exempted from pre-embarkation security checks at airports.

## 2. Appellate Jurisdiction of High Court

The appellate jurisdiction of High Court extends to both civil and criminal cases.

- In civil cases, its jurisdiction extends to cases tried by Courts of Munsifs and District judges.
- In the criminal cases it extends to cases decided by Sessions and Additional Sessions Judges.

Thus, the jurisdiction of the High Court extends to all cases under the State or federal laws.

- Its jurisdiction can be enlarged by the Parliament and the State Legislature.
- A State Legislature has power to make laws touching the jurisdictions and powers of all Courts within the State with respect to all subjects enumerated in the State List and the Concurrent List. But as regards the subjects in the Concurrent List the Union law prevails in case of conflict.

## 3. HC's Power of Superintendence:



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A High Court has also the power of superintendence over all Courts and Tribunals except those dealing with the armed forces functioning in the State.

- This power has made the High Court responsible for the entire administration of Justice in the State.
- It is both judicial as well as administrative in nature.
- The Constitution does not place any restriction on its power of superintendence over the subordinate Courts. It may be noted the Supreme Court has no similar power vis-a-vis the High Court.

### **Tribunalisation side-steps the authority of HC**

Tribunals have replaced high courts for disputes under the Companies Act, Competition Act, SEBI Act, Electricity Act, and Consumer Protection Act among others.

In general sense, the 'tribunals' are not courts of normal jurisdiction, but they have very specific and predefined work area. These tribunals do not enjoy the same constitutional protection as high courts.

Any person aggrieved by an order of an appellate tribunal can directly appeal to the Supreme Court, side-stepping the high court.

### **Several institutional concerns**

The enormous institutional investment to protect the independence of high courts is dispensed with when it comes to tribunals.

- Critics say that Tribunals are also not as accessible as high courts. This makes justice expensive and difficult to access.
- Further, the justification of expert adjudication by tribunals disappears as many tribunals are presided over by retired high court judges.
- Approaching SC directly after appellate tribunal renders the Supreme court into to a mere appellate court. The Supreme Court should be a court of last resort deciding cases of the moment, and not a final forum with an all-embracing jurisdiction over disputes ranging from a custody battle to the scope of a municipal by-law.

### **Issue of backlog**

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A backlog of over 58,000 cases in the Supreme Court precludes it from being a deliberative court reflecting over critical questions of law. It can affect the quality of the court's jurisprudence.

High courts are the training grounds for future Supreme Court judges. When high court judges deal with several cases under a particular area of law, they carry with them the benefit of their experience and insights to the Supreme Court.

### **CENTRE FREEZES ARTICLE 35A HEARING**

The Centre convinced the Supreme Court to defer hearing on petitions challenging the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir. The court is hearing a writ petition filed by NGO, We the Citizens, which challenges the validity of both Article 35A and Article 370.

#### **Reasons forwarded by the centre:**

- The government has appointed Dineshwar Sharma, a former IB director, as interlocutor.
- He has started talks with stakeholders. If the court hears this case, it will affect dialogue process.

#### **Article 35A**

- It is a provision incorporated in the Indian Constitution giving the Jammu and Kashmir State Legislature to decide 'permanent residents' of the State.
- Grant those permanent resident special rights and privileges in State public sector jobs, acquisition of property within the State, scholarships and other public aid and welfare programmes.

#### **Issue with Article 35A**

Article 35A was incorporated into the Indian Constitution in 1954 by an order of President. The provision mandates that no act of the State

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legislature coming under the ambit of Article 35A can be challenged for violating the Indian Constitution or any other law of the land.

- The Presidential Order was issued under Article 370 (1) (d) of the Indian Constitution to add Article 35A.
- Parliament was not consulted when the President incorporated Article 35A into the Indian Constitution through a Presidential Order issued under Article 370.
- Whereas, Article 368 (i) of the Constitution mandates that only the Parliament can amend the Constitution by introducing a new Article.

## **WELFARE SCHEMES AND DEVELOPMENTAL GROUPS**

### **DENYING FOOD DUE TO THE LACK OF AADHAAR**

#### **Issue**

As per the National Food Security Act, the States have been given time till December to link Aadhaar with ration cards. However, the deadline for mandatory linking of Aadhaar for benefits of government schemes would be extended till March 31 next for those who do not have the biometric identification number. So far, 82% of the ration cards have been seeded with Aadhaar.

The instruction of extension to all the States, after an 11-year-old Jharkhand girl allegedly died of starvation recently after she was denied PDS rations.

#### **Actions:**

Union Food Ministry clarified that deletion from the ration card database could happen only after a proper verification of the ration card holder establishes “beyond reasonable doubt” that an entry pertaining to the said ration card holder is not genuine.

- Until Aadhaar is assigned to the beneficiary, subsidised foodgrains will have to be given on production of ration card, enrolment slip and other stipulated documents.

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- Even in the case of failure of biometric authentication due to a glitch or poor biometric quality, the beneficiary will have to be given the benefits on production of Aadhaar card along with the ration card.
- The States and the Union Territories will have to provide Aadhaar enrolment facilities to those without Aadhaar and link their Aadhaar numbers with ration cards

## **INDIA AND ITS INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

### **ALL THE ROADS THAT LEAD TO KABUL**

Recently, U.S. Secretary of State reproved Pakistan for not doing enough against terrorists operating from its soil. At the same time, Afghan President has underlined that the time had come for Islamabad to make a choice between abandoning state sponsorship of terrorism and facing the consequences.

#### **Rising importance of India**

Afghan President's remark came when the US administration's South Asia policy has underscored India's centrality in the 'Af-Pak' theatre.

As Washington plans to increase its military footprint in Afghanistan, it is tightening the screws on Pakistan for supporting terrorism as an instrument of state policy. Both Washington and Kabul now view New Delhi as a player with considerable leverage over the evolving regional dynamic.

#### **US's New South Asia policy:**

The central feature of the Trump administration's new Afghanistan policy is an outreach to India. US appreciated India's important contributions to stability in Afghanistan and wants India to help them more with Afghanistan, especially in the area of economic assistance and development.

- Deployment of additional US troops soldiers to train and buttress Afghan forces with gradual pull out plans at apt period as a hasty withdrawal would create a vacuum for terrorists.

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- Strong focus on Pakistan to make sure it abides by its commitments. Pakistan being watched closely by his administration to keep check on the country becoming safe havens for terrorist organizations.
- US administration's South Asia policy is to further develop the US's strategic partnership with India. India is now being viewed as part of the solution to the Afghan imbroglio.

### **Afghan stand**

Kabul has wholeheartedly embraced this strategy, with Afghan President terming it a “game-changer” for the region as it “recommends multi-dimensional condition-based approach for the region.” In a remarkable move, he went on to suggest that Afghanistan would restrict Pakistan's access to Central Asia if it is not given access to India through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.

- The Indo-Afghan air corridor could be an effective response to Pakistan's attempt to deny India and Afghanistan any direct access.
- It strongly rejected Islamabad's claims that India was using Afghanistan as a base to destabilise Pakistan.
- President made it clear that there were “no secret agreements” between Kabul and New Delhi.
- Also rejected “Pakistan-managed” efforts to broker peace in the country

### **India's commitment**

In line with Kabul's response, India too has emphasised that it believes peace efforts in Afghanistan should be “Afghan-led” and “Afghan-controlled”.

- India continues to maintain that renunciation of violence and terror, and closure of state-sponsored safe havens and sanctuaries remain essential for any meaningful progress and lasting peace.

### **India - Afghanistan**

In recent years, India has not shied away from taking a high-profile role in Afghanistan. It remains one of the biggest donors of aid to Afghanistan, having committed \$3.1 billion since 2001.

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- Training of Afghan personnel at Indian military academies.
- India's agenda is to build the capacity of the Afghan state as well as of Afghan security forces, enabling them to fight their own battles more effectively. This is in line with the requirements of the Afghan government as well as the international community.
- India-Afghanistan Trade and Investment Show in New Delhi generated business worth over US \$ 200 million.
- Opening of the air freight corridor between Kandahar and Kabul and Delhi.
- Afghan cities of Mazar-e-Sharif and Herat have been connected directly by air to Delhi.
- Recently, it announced that it will be working on 116 new development projects in more than 30 areas

### **Way forward**

Expanding India's development role and enhancing its security profile with greater military assistance to Afghanistan should be a priority, as new strategic opportunities open up in Afghanistan.

The recent bout of diplomatic activity in the region is a clear signal that India can no longer be treated as a marginal player in Afghanistan. Even Russia wants to keep India in the loop.

## **HOUSING PROJECT DEAL IN HAMBANTOTA**

### **What is the deal about?**

Sri Lanka and India signed an agreement to build 1,200 houses in the southern port city- Hambantota. The plan includes building one model village in each of the country's 25 districts.

### **Why Hambantota?**

The coastal city of Hambantota gained strategic significance after Sri Lanka built a massive port and an airport with huge Chinese loans. This year majority stake of the port to China to service an outstanding \$8-billion debt it owes China, fanning concerns of countries with competing strategic interests, particularly India and the U.S. Local residents protested the selling of "national assets to foreign entities" leading to violent clashes.

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Hambantota is right in the middle of vital energy supply lines in the Indian Ocean, connecting the Middle East and East Asia

- The signing assumes significance not only in its timing, but also in taking India's housing project to the Sinhala-majority Southern Province.
- India has been taking steps to protect itself in the Indian Ocean by allying itself with the United States and Japan in a clear bid to counter growing Chinese influence

### **INDIA AND US TRADE ISSUES**

Trade between the two countries has reached USD 64.51 billion in 2016-17. However, foreign direct investment from the US into India has dipped

India has already started to import crude oil and new Liquefied Natural Gas exports are expected to commence early next year. Indian aviation companies such as Spicejet and Jet Airways have placed orders for over 300 aircrafts valued at several billions of dollars.

The Trade Policy Forum serves as a robust platform that contributes towards promoting bilateral trade and investment between India and the US. During the meeting, in Washington D.C, discussions were held on various trade issues.

#### **US concerns:**

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- Market access issues
- Ground handling operations
- Import regulations relating to poultry
- Export of pork to India.
- Price controls on medical devices

**India concerns:**

- Easing of procedure for export of Indian mangoes and pomegranates and market access for table grapes from India.
- Problems faced by Indian services companies in obtaining H-1B and L-1 visas. It requested the US to ease the movement of skilled professionals as Indian IT companies contribute significantly to the American economy.
- Issue of mismatch between U.S. visa and U.S. social security regimes, wherein Indian professionals making social security contributions do not receive their due benefits upon their return to India

**Indian overtures of late**

Draft Pharmaceutical Policy addresses many of the US concerns and sought comments from industry stakeholders on the draft policy.

National IPR Policy 2016, lays down the roadmap for future development in the field of IPRs, and is a major step towards strengthening the IPR ecosystem in India, including improvements in procedures, timelines and resolution of disputes.

India desires to address the concerns of providing affordable healthcare to its citizens and balancing it with the need to introduce high end technology. American manufacturers of medical devices are encouraged to establish manufacturing facilities in India.



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### **FIRST SHIPMENT OF WHEAT VIA CHABAHAR**

The Iranian port of Chabahar processed a maiden shipment of wheat from India's western seaport of Kandla to Afghanistan. Chabahar port lies outside the Persian Gulf on the Gulf of Oman and can be easily accessed from India's western coast.

#### **Backgrounder**

The shipment is a part of commitment made by India to supply 1.1 million tons of wheat for free to the people of Afghanistan and is the first shipment to Afghanistan through the Chabahar port since the Trilateral Agreement on Establishment of International Transport and Transit Corridor was signed in 2016.

#### **What it entails?**

The use of Chabahar port is seen as a major boost to India's efforts to connect with Central Asia and Russia, and it could facilitate Indian imports of iron ore, sugar and rice as well as crude oil from Iran.

- India's development of Chabahar port has been seen as a move to counter China's presence in the Arabian Sea. China is working with Pakistan to develop Gwadar port which is less than 100 nautical miles from Chabahar by road.
- India to play a larger role in stabilizing war-torn Afghanistan via its

#### **INSTC:**

International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), the Chabahar-Zahedan-Zaranj corridor would connect South Asia on one hand and Europe on the other. INSTC is an ambitious multimodal transport system established in 2000 by Iran, Russia and India to promote transportation cooperation. It is planned to connect the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea through Iran and then onwards to St. Petersburg and northern Europe through Russia.

developmental assistance and aiding domestic led security.

### **INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS**

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### **FIRST BIMSTEC TASK FORCE MEET ON TRADITIONAL MEDICINE**

India being a major stakeholder in the field of Traditional Medicine plays an important role in influencing the policies and strategies related to the Traditional Medicine in the BIMSTEC Forum

**Venue:** New Delhi

**Organized by:** Union Ministry of AYUSH

#### **Agenda:**

- Implementation of Strategies of BIMSTEC Task Force on Traditional Medicines
- Identification of priority areas in traditional medicine for technical and research collaboration among member states
- Regional Strategy for protection of Genetic Resource associated with Traditional Medicine Knowledge and Intellectual Property Rights
- Human Resource Development and Capacity Building among the BIMSTEC Member States
- New Initiative, proposals and programmes for cooperation on Traditional Medicine among the BIMSTEC Task Force on Traditional Medicine.

### **INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CONSUMER PROTECTION**

**Venue:** New Delhi

**Organised by:** Department of Consumer Affairs in association with UNCTAD

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### **New Consumer Protection Bill**

It will replace the Consumer Protection Act of 1986 by incorporating the amended 2015 UN guidelines on consumer protection.

#### **Important provisions**

It proposes to have Consumer Dispute Redressal Commissions, which will be set up at the district, state and national levels

- Central Consumer Protection Authority with executive powers will be constituted for quick remedial action.
- New BIS Act with specific emphasis on Hallmarking Scheme for ornaments.
- Provision of high quality ICT infrastructure
- Consumer safety from hazardous goods, complete disclosure of all information for guidance of consumers
- Regulations against identity theft and provision for data privacy protection.
- Crack down on misleading advertisements

**Theme:** Empowering Consumers in New Markets

### **Details**

This is the first time an international conference on consumer protection is being organised by India for 22 countries from East, South and South-East Asia which account for a majority of the global consumers and share common challenges and experiences.

#### **Other measures taken for the benefit of consumers:**

1. Increased competition among companies due to the GST will lead to moderation in prices and this will directly benefit poor and middle class consumers.
2. Bureau of Indian Standard Act – commodity or service is brought under compulsory certification. The Act has provisions to order recall of substandard products from the market.
3. Ujala scheme – use of energy-efficient LED bulbs has not just brought down their prices as well as saved on electricity bills
4. Jan Aushadhi Pariyojna – affordable medicines to people, brought down prices of life-saving heart stent implants as well as knee implants

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5. "Give it up' campaign under which more than one crore beneficiaries surrendered their LPG subsidy. The saved subsidy amount have been used to give free gas connections to 3 crore households
6. Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act has been enacted to protect home buyers and the government is working to achieve the target of housing for all by 2022.

**UNCTAD:**

*Established:* 1964.

*Objective:* To formulate policies relating to all aspects of development including trade, aid, transport, finance and technology.

UNCTAD is the principal organ of the United Nations General Assembly dealing with trade, investment, and development issues. The conference ordinarily

### **CHINA RELUCTANT TO BAN AZHAR**

China has said that it is once again not designating Masood Azhar, head of the Pakistan-based militant group Jaish-e-Mohammad, as an international terrorist.

It raised the issue of lack of consensus and asked for a technical hold to allow for more time for all parties to deliberate on this matter.

#### **Context**

The 1267 committee of the U.N. Security Council was discussing the status of Azhar.

#### **UNSC 1267 Committee:**

- The UNSC 1267 Committee is also known as the AlQaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee.
- It was established for the purpose of overseeing the implementation of sanctions measures imposed on Taliban-controlled Afghanistan for its support of Osama bin Laden.
- However in course of time, the 1267 sanctions regime has been modified and strengthened by subsequent resolutions.
- If an individual or terrorist organisation is included in this list, it helps in restricting their movement, financial penalties and assets freeze among others.

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- The Committee comprises all 15 members of the UNSC and makes its decision by consensus and secretly. If single member opposes it there is no consensus.

That's why China opposition to India's bid is not allowing UNSC to designate Masood Azhar as an international terrorist and freeze his assets and travel ban. The committee is being criticised for being non transparent and in recent time there is demand for its reforms to address procedural shortcomings especially from India.

### **SPAIN SACKS CATALAN GOVERNMENT**

Catalonia is one of Spain's most prosperous regions and already has a high degree of autonomy. But it has a series of historic grievances, exacerbated during the 1939-1975 Franco dictatorship, when its culture and politics were suppressed.

Catalonia held an Independent referendum on Oct. 1, 2017 which was declared illegal by Madrid and marred by heavy-handed national police tactics to stop it.

#### **Details**

The Catalan parliament had voted to make a unilateral declaration of independence. Shortly afterwards the Spanish Senate in Madrid approved the imposition of direct rule.

- It sacked the head of the autonomous region, also fired its police chief and said central government ministries would take over the Catalan administration.
- A new regional election will be held in Catalonia in December
- Several European countries, including France and Germany, and the United States also rejected the independence declaration and said they supported efforts to preserve Spain's unity.

### **FISHING SUBSIDIES AND WTO**

The WTO's Ministerial Conference meeting which will be held at Buenos Aires (Argentina) in December 2017 will decide on fishing subsidies.

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### **Why the decision is important?**

1. Addressing government incentives that drive unsustainable fisheries practices is an environmental imperative.
2. Also, government subsidies in the fisheries sector can have severe negative social and economic impacts for the most vulnerable countries and communities.
3. Harmful fishing subsidies (globally) that contribute to overfishing are estimated to be as high as \$35 billion.

### **FIRST NATION TO QUIT ICC**

Burundi became the First ever nation to leave the International Criminal Court (ICC), the world's only permanent war crimes tribunal.

### **Why did it quit?**

A UN commission of Inquiry on Burundi reported recently that it had found evidence of extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests and torture and sexual violence in the years since the present president muscled his way to a third term in office.

Burundi accuses ICC of being hijacked by powerful western interests and acting as a proxy for foreign led government change.

### **About ICC**

International Criminal Court, set up in July 2002, headquartered at Hague, Netherlands to prosecute those behind the world's worst atrocities.

## **GENERAL STUDIES-3**

### **INDIAN ECONOMY**

#### **RANK 100 IN DOING BUSINESS REPORT, 2018**

**Report by:** World Bank

#### **India's performance**

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The DB Report is an assessment of 190 economies and covers 10 indicators which span the lifecycle of a business.

- India has leapt 30 ranks over its rank of 130 in the Doing Business Report 2017.
- This edition of the report acknowledges India as a top improver, with an improvement of 30 ranks compared to last year's report, the highest jump in rank of any country in the DB Report, 2018.

### **Why such a leap?**

“Reform, Perform, Transform”

A strong leadership has provided the political will to carry out comprehensive and complex reforms, supported by a bureaucracy committed to perform.

An extensive exercise is also undertaken to increase awareness among users about reforms to ensure extensive use of newly created systems.

### **CRYPTO CURRENCIES MAY COME UNDER SEBI LENS**

An increasing number of entities looking at raising funds through Initial Coin Offerings (ICO) and the currency's increasing popularity, has caught the attention of the capital market regulator.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) is mulling whether an ICO can be regulated under the existing legal framework or certain amendments would be required.

### **How regulators see it?**

Crypto currencies like *bitcoin*, *ethereum* and such offerings have been under government radar for long and discussions have been held between various bodies, including SEBI and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), on the possible ways in which this segment can be regulated.

The central bank is of the view that these instruments are securities and so SEBI should be the regulating body.

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Bitcoins are neither 'commodities derivatives' nor 'securities' under Securities Contracts (Regulation) Act, 1956.

### **Initial Coin Offerings (ICO)**

An ICO, like an initial public offer (IPO), is an issuance of digital tokens that can be converted into crypto currencies and are mostly used to raise funds by start-up firms dealing in block chain technology and virtual currencies like bitcoins and ethereum.

### **Concerns**

China recently banned such offerings after its central bank said that ICOs are "illegal public finance" mechanism used for issue of securities and money laundering.

### **Bitcoin**

Bitcoin is a worldwide crypto currency and digital payment system called the first decentralized digital currency, as the system works without a central repository or single administrator.

- The system is peer-to-peer, and transactions take place between users directly, without an intermediary.
- These transactions are verified by network nodes and recorded in a public distributed ledger called a blockchain

Start-ups like Zebpay, Unocoin, Coinsecure, Searchtrade, Belfrics and Bitxoxo are some of the well-known players in the bitcoin and blockchain segment in India.

## **A BOLD STEP IN BANK REFORM**

### **What's the move?**

The Centre plans to infuse ₹ 2.11 lakh crore capital over the next two years into public sector banks (PSBs).

### **What necessitated such huge infusion?**

PSBs are burdened with high, non-performing assets and facing the prospect of having to take haircuts on loans stuck in insolvency



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proceedings. Indiscriminate lending earlier by banks is the main reason for high level of NPAs (non-performing assets).

The government's re-capitalisation package for public sector banks will provide a strong booster dose of relief for the capital starved public sector

#### **Twin Balance Sheet Problem of India**

Twin Balance Sheet Problem (TBS) deals with two balance sheet problems. One with Indian companies and the other with Indian Banks. TBS is two two-fold problem for Indian economy which deals with:

- Overleveraged companies – Debt accumulation on companies is very high and thus they are unable to pay interest payments on loans.
- Bad-loan-encumbered-banks – Non Performing Assets (NPA) of the banks is 9% for the total banking system of India. It is as high as 12.1% for Public Sector Banks. As companies fail to pay back principal or interest, banks are also in trouble.

banks

#### **How can recapitalisation be a remedy?**

With India's economic growth faltering in the last couple of years, the government has been making efforts to galvanise the economy with moves like Demonetisation and introduction of GST. Their economic benefits will be long-term while the short-term disruption has been very real.

- Recapitalising public sector banks (PSBs) and enhancing the flow of credit is critical for revitalising India's growth momentum at a time when the global economy is recovering.
- The move is vital for the slowing economy as private investments remain elusive in the face of the "twin-balance sheet problem" worrying corporate India and public sector banks reflected in slow bank credit growth.

#### **NPAs AND CAPITAL**

Higher cost, lower revenues, greater financial costs-all squeezed corporate cash flow leading to NPAs in the banking sector.

'Capital' is a combination of equity, equity-like instruments and bonds. And hence, for a given balance sheet, there is a certain minimum of capital that banks must hold. This is called 'capital adequacy'. If the capital is

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above the regulatory minimum, the banks have greater freedom to lend. If capital falls below the regulatory minimum, banks cannot lend or face restrictions on lending.

When loans go bad and turn into non-performing assets (NPAs), banks have to make provisions for potential losses. This tends to erode bank capital and put the brakes on loan growth.

'Stressed advances' (which represent non-performing loans as well as restructured loans and written off loans) have risen from a little over 10% in 2012-13 to 15% in 2016-17. This has caused capital adequacy at PSBs to fall.

In this context, for bailing out of stressed Banks, recapitalization was very much needed.

### **Causes of deceleration in credit growth**

1. **Poor demand**: Corporates have excessive debt and are in no position to finance any investment. Moreover, demand for investment finance may have decelerated but demand for working capital remains strong.
2. **Supply of credit**: It has to do with PSBs' inability to lend for want of adequate capital.

### **Problem of PSBs**

Market estimates had placed the requirement of government capital at a minimum of ₹ 2 lakh crore over a four-year period. In 2015, under the Indradhanush Plan, the government chose to commit a mere ₹ 70,000 crore over the period.

PSBs, unlike their private sector counterparts, had lent heavily to infrastructure and other related sectors of the economy. Following the global financial crisis of 2007, sectors to which PSBs were exposed came to be impacted in ways that could not have been entirely foreseen. The failure to quickly recapitalise PSBs has adversely impacted the economy. It has hindered the effective resolution of the NPA problem and kept major projects from going through to completion.

### **Source of funds for Recapitalization**

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Of the ₹ 2.11 trillion package, ₹ 1.35 trillion will be from issue of recapitalisation bonds. PSBs will subscribe to these bonds. The government will plough back the funds into banks as equity. Another ₹ 18 billion will be provided as budgetary support. The remaining will be raised from the market.

### **Fiscal impact of the recapitalisation**

International norms allow borrowings for bank recapitalisation not to be counted towards the fiscal deficit. In the past, India has used this accounting practice.

The proposed recapitalisation bonds are likely to add to the fiscal deficit unless the government resorts to other practice such as getting the Life Insurance Corporation of India or a separate holding company to issue the bonds.

### **In conclusion**

The government should not worry unduly about missing the fiscal deficit target of 3.2% of GDP. The markets will understand that the fiscal stimulus is well spent. The government has shown courage in opting for substantial recapitalisation of banks.

## **PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (PFMS)**

Mandatory use of Public Finance Management System will help monitor the flow of funds to beneficiaries of different government welfare schemes.

### **Advantages:**

- ✓ The actual status of utilization of funds by the multiple implementing agencies of the Central and the State Governments can be known.
- ✓ There will not be much paper work and it would go a long way in monitoring and tracking of any unnecessary parking of funds by the implementing agencies

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- ✓ Minimizes the cases of delay and pending payments to a large extent.
- ✓ PFMS will progress towards a Government wide Integrated Financial Management System (GIFMIS) – as a comprehensive Payment, Receipt and Accounting System.
- ✓ PFMS, with the capability of providing real time information on resource availability, flows and actual utilization has tremendous potential to improve programme/financial management, reduce the float in the financial systems by enabling ‘just in time’ releases and also the Government borrowings with direct impact on interest costs to the Government.

It initially started as a Plan scheme of the Planning Commission in 2008-09 as a pilot in four States for Flagship schemes like MGNREGS, NRHM, SSA and PMGSY. After the initial phase of establishing a network across Ministries / Departments, it has been decided to undertake National rollout of PFMS to link the financial networks of Central, State Governments and the agencies of State Governments.

## **AGRICULTURE AND CROPPING PATTERNS**

### **INDIA: A LEADER OF MILK PRODUCTION**

Union Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Minister said India is emerging as a leader among milk producing nations. With around 14% of the total cattle population of the world, India produces over 160 million tonne milk worth over Rs.4 lakh crore.

#### **Rashtriya Gokul Mission:**

Rashtriya Gokul Mission, 2014 is a focussed project under National Programme for Bovine Breeding and Dairy Development. It’s objective is to conserve and propagate indigenous breeds in an organized and scientific manner.

- MAITRI centres are being set up to facilitate artificial insemination for cattle on the doorstep.
- One Gokul Gram (Integrated Indigenous Cattle Centres) will have 500 animals with high genetic quality, out of which 300 will be reproductive animals. The Gokul Grams will rear Lal Sindhi, Sahiwal and Gir breeds along with Bachaur.

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### **Importance of Indigenous animals:**

Indigenous animals are more suitable for the country particularly for climate and environment of their reproductive areas. They are endowed with qualities of heat tolerance, resistance to diseases and the ability to thrive under extreme climatic stress and less than optimal nutrition.

Dairy farming has been a traditional source of livelihood and it has a deep connection with the agricultural economy. It is essential to increase productivity of Indigenous breeds in the country through commercial farm management and balanced nutrition.

## **INDUSTRY, INFRASTRUCTURE AND INVESTMENT**

### **BHARATMALA PROJECT**

Cabinet gave an approval for spending 5.35 lakh crore to build 34,800 km of roads nationwide, including in border and coastal areas. The aim is to encourage, under BharatMala Pariyojana, the economy as private investment remains moribund.

### **Why was it needed?**

National Highways suffer from the deficiencies of inadequate capacity, poor riding quality, distressed bridges, unabridged level crossings, congested cities, lack of wayside amenities and other safety measures.

- There is very little participation of private sector in road development in India because of long gestation period and low-returns.
- There was no stable policy on highway development in the country.
- There is shortage of funds for the construction and maintenance of roads.

### **BharatMala Pariyojana:**

It is the new umbrella programme to further optimise the efficiency of movement of goods and people across the country.

- The total investment for the Bharatmala plan is estimated at Rs10 trillion, which is the largest ever outlay for a government road construction scheme.

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- The BharatMala project will include economic corridors, inter-corridor and feeder route, national corridors efficiency improvement, border roads and international connectivity, coastal roads and port connectivity and Greenfield expressways.
- Bharat Mala will provide easier access to border areas for armed forces and boost trade via the land route.
- Bharatmala will replace National Highways Development Project (NHDP) launched in 1998 as the scheme is expected to be completed by this year.

### **BHARAT NET PROJECT PROGRESS**

**Aim:** To deploy high-speed optical fibre cables across rural areas

**Phase 1:** It will be completed by December this year, thus providing internet access to 100,000 gram panchayats,

#### **Challenges:**

India being the highest consumer of mobile data throws up as many challenges as opportunities.

- Public and private sector need to join hands in achieving the objective of doubling the reach of telecom fibre network in the country by 2020.
- Issues such as cyber security, data protection & privacy, regulation of data and, importantly, data monetisation need to be addressed.
- How India will leverage its Aadhaar and Election Commission data base.
- How the country will tackle the privacy debate after the Supreme Court ruling on privacy being a fundamental right

## **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

### **ICHTHYOSAUR FOSSIL**

Scientists in India have discovered a 152 million-year-old fossil of an Ichthyosaur – an extinct marine reptile – in the western state of Gujarat.

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The fossil which is 5.5 m long was found inside rocks from the Mesozoic Era, which ran between 250 and 65 million years ago, in the Kutch desert.

Examination of the teeth of the fossil suggests that it was a top-tier predator in its ecosystem

### **Details**

Often misidentified as “swimming dinosaurs”, they first appeared in the early Triassic period.

- The name means fish-lizard, although the creature has been classified as a reptile since the mid-19th Century
- Ichthyosaurs became extinct before the dinosaurs, dying out in the early part of the late Cretaceous period

### **Significance**

It throws light on the evolution and diversity of ichthyosaurs in the Indo-Madagascan region and India’s biological connectivity with other continents in the Jurassic.

Identification of the new specimen may further throw light on whether there was any marine connection between India and South America about 150 million years ago

## **IMBIBING SCIENCE**

### **Vidyarthi Vigyan Manthan (VVM)**

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It is a nationwide science talent search examination to give a boost to the learning of science, technology and mathematics among the youth- especially the school students.

**Organized by:** Eminent scientists and academicians associated with Vigyan Prasar (VP) – an autonomous organisation under Department of Science and Technology and National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) of Ministry of Human Resources and Development .

**Significance:**

The Vidyarthi Vigyan Manthan will provide a platform to the India's generation next to imbibe the values of science and technology for a better future. One of the unique features of this examination is that the test will be conducted online. Students will attend the exam through the various digital devices like, mobile, tablet, laptop or desktop in line with the vision of Digital India Campaign.

**Vijnana Bharati (VIBHA)**

It is one of the largest science movement in the country led by eminent scientists. It is to inculcate and generate scientific temper, foster excellence in students and nurture and mentor them for their careers in pure sciences.

- Through VVM programme, India's generation next will be made aware about the India's Rich Contribution to Science from ancient period to modern times.

**BADRABBIT RANSOMWARE**

In October, notifications of mass attacks with ransomware called Bad Rabbit was observed.

The BadRabbit attack mainly affected Russia but also caused flight delays southern Ukraine and disrupted electronic payments in the Kiev metro.

**NEW VIRUS LINKED TO KALA-AZAR**



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Parasite *Leishmania donovani* is believed to be responsible for the dreaded infection. People get infected when bitten by an insect called the sandfly, which harbours the disease-causing parasite.

### **New discovery**

Another parasite called *Leptomonas seymouri* may also be present. It's still early to pointedly blame the virus but its discovery portends a new kind of treatment regime and may aid attempts to eradicate the disease.

### **Kala-azar**

Visceral leishmaniasis (VL), also known as kala-azar, black fever, and Dumdum fever, is the most severe form of leishmaniasis and, without proper diagnosis and treatment, is associated with high fatality.

- Caused by protozoan parasites of the *Leishmania* genus, migrates to the internal organs such as the liver, spleen (hence “visceral”), and bone marrow
- Signs and symptoms include fever, weight loss, fatigue, anemia, and substantial swelling of the liver and spleen.
- Kala-azar is endemic to the Indian subcontinent in 119 districts in four countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India and Nepal)
- This disease is the second-largest parasitic killer in the world

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **CAPPING THE CAR NUMBERS**

Singapore, one of the most expensive places in the world to buy a vehicle, froze the number of private cars on its roads for at least two years, a rare move in Asia where many cities are increasingly gridlocked.

### **Details**

- It applies to private cars and motorcycles, but not to goods vehicles and buses.
- New multi-billion-dollar investment in the public transport network.

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- Tough controls on vehicle ownership to address High Traffic Congestion and air pollution problems City-state has a largely efficient public transport system, including buses, trains and a metro.
- However it faced criticism recently after the metro suffered a series of breakdowns.

## **GLOBAL WILDLIFE CONFERENCE**

### **Why in news?**

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has announced that India will host next Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) Conference of Parties 13 (CMS COP13) in year 2020. CMS COP is also known as a Global Wildlife Conference.

It is only international treaty devoted exclusively to migratory animal species held in Philippines.

### **Outcomes of the COP12**

- Governments agreed to cooperate on reducing the negative impacts of marine debris, noise pollution, renewable energy and climate change on migratory species.
- A vulture multi-species action plan to better protect 15 species of Old World Vulture in more than 120 countries, comprising four that are critically endangered.

#### **CMS**

CMS is an international treaty concluded under aegis of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), concerned with conservation of wildlife and habitats on a global scale.

- It is also called the Bonn Convention.
- CMS aims to conserve terrestrial, marine and avian migratory species throughout their range.

## **SECURITY CHALLENGES**

### **'EX BLUE FLAG-17'**

Blue Flag is a bi-annual multilateral exercise which aims to strengthen military cooperation amongst participating nations. The exercise would

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provide a platform for sharing of knowledge, combat experience and in improving operational capability of the participating nations.

- A 45 member contingent of the Indian Air Force left for Israel to participate in exercise 'Blue Flag-17'.
- This is the *first time* the Indian Air Force is operating with Israeli AF in a multilateral exercise setting.