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### **General Studies-1**

#### **Pre-historic rock art site discovered in Andhra Pradesh**

A pre-historic rock art site discovered in the vast expanse of limestone blocks on the eastern banks of Naguleru near Dachepalli has thrown light on the Neolithic civilisation that flourished in Guntur during 1500-2000 BC.

#### **About the Site:**

“The rock art site on natural lime stone is the first of its kind in the country. The motifs in the form of engraving, pecking and brushing throw fascinating insights into the social and cultural practices of ancient civilisations.

What has made archaeologists look up this latest discovery is the dexterity with which early human was able to engrave different animal motifs like fish, snake, peacock, eagle, bull and scorpion on limestone blocks.

One petroglyph shows an anthropomorphic figure with its head in between the two hands.

Another engraving shows a warrior holding a sword and a shield, indicating the practices during Iron Age.

The region in later years was also synonymous with the flourishing of Buddhism.

A stupa established on the pre-historic rock art site during during 1-2 BC, was unearthed during excavations by the Department of [Archaeology](#) and Museums in 1969.

#### **Misuse of PIL for Vested Interests:**

Supreme Court says it is a travesty of justice for the resources of the legal system to be consumed by an avalanche of misdirected public interest petitions.

The Supreme Court on Thursday derided the Loya PIL petitions as a case in point of how public interest litigation has become an “industry of vested interests” rather than a powerful tool to espouse the cause of the marginalised and oppressed.



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The judgment said PIL had now become a façade for people hungry for publicity or those who wanted to settle personal, business or political scores. The true face of the litigant behind the façade was seldom unravelled.

### **About PIL**

- The PIL was envisioned by the Supreme Court's legendary judges as "a powerful instrument to preserve the rule of law and to ensure the accountability of and transparency within structures of governance".
- Public Interest Litigation is directly filed by an individual or group of people in the [Supreme Court of India](#).
- It was felt that their interests are undermined by the government. In such a situation, the court directly accepts the public good.
- It is a new legal horizon in which court of law can initiate and enforce action to serve and secure significant Public Interest.
- The concept of public interest litigation (PIL) is in consonance with the principles enshrined in [Article 39A](#) of the [Constitution of India](#) to protect and deliver prompt social justice with the help of law.
- Before the 1980s, only the aggrieved party could approach the courts for justice. After the [emergency era](#) the high court reached out to the people, devising a means for any person of the public (or an NGO) to approach the court seeking [legal remedy](#) in cases where the public interest is at stake.

Justice [P. N. Bhagwati](#) and Justice [V. R. Krishna Iyer](#) were among the first judges to admit PILs in court

### **PIL can be filed against govt only, not individuals**

### **Importance of PIL**

- Public interest litigation gives a wider description to the right to equality, life and personality which is guaranteed under part III of the Constitution of India.
- It has introduced some kinds of reliefs or remedies under the writ jurisdiction.
- It also functions as an effective instrument for changes in the society or social welfare.
- Through public interest litigation, any public or person can seek remedy on behalf of the oppressed class by introducing a PIL.

### **National Anthem in Cinema Halls:**



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### **Why in News?**

The inter-ministerial committee, set up to “frame guidelines describing circumstances and occasions on which the national anthem is to be played or sung”, is likely to suggest that cinema halls should not play the national anthem before screening a film.

### **Rationale Behind Decision:**

The committee, according to sources, is of the view that playing the national anthem will interrupt the screening of the film, and create disorder and confusion instead of adding to the dignity of the anthem.

The 12-member panel, set up on December 5, 2017, was given six months time to come up with statutory requirements on playing the national anthem in cinema halls and public places.

### **Other Recommendations:**

The committee, sources said, is likely to suggest that the national anthem should be played before and after:

- The President’s address to the nation on All India Radio, arrival of the Governor/ Lieutenant Governor at formal state functions,
- When the national flag is brought out on parade, when the regimental colours are presented, and
- During morning assembly in schools. Whether or not the national anthem should be sung while unfurling the national flag should be left to the good sense of the people.

The shorter version of the anthem (20 seconds), according to the committee, should be played before raising toasts in the officers’ mess. Also, when the national anthem is played by a band, it should be preceded by a roll of drums.

### **Background:**

The Centre’s decision to set up the committee came after a Supreme Court bench, comprising Justices A M Khanwilkar and D Y Chandrachud, in October last year observed that people “cannot be forced to carry patriotism on their sleeves” and it cannot be assumed that if a person does not stand up for the national anthem, he or she is “less patriotic”.



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### **Earlier Decision:**

On January 9 this year, a bench headed by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra Tuesday modified the November 30, 2016 order which had made the playing of national anthem in cinema halls mandatory.

The bench said it would be up to cinema hall owners whether or not to play the national anthem. The bench, also comprising Justices A M Khanwilkar and D Y Chandrachud, made it clear, however, that movie-goers will have to show respect to the anthem in case it is played, and they will have to stand.

### **Gram swaraj abhiyan**

#### ***About Gram Swaraj Abhiyan:***

“Gram Swaraj Abhiyan” is being organised between 14th April to 05th May, 2018.

- The campaign, undertaken under the name of “Sabka Sath, Sabka Gaon, Sabka Vikas”, is to promote social harmony, spread awareness about pro-poor initiatives of government, reach out to poor households to enroll them as also to obtain their feedback on various welfare programmes.
- As a special endeavour during the Gram Swaraj Abhiyan, ***saturation of eligible households/persons would be made under seven flagship pro-poor programmes*** in 21,058 identified villages.
- ***The programmes covered*** are Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana, Saubhagya, Ujala scheme, Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana and Mission Indradhanush.



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### **Geography**

- India's coasts will be lashed by 'high energy swell waves' on Saturday and Sunday, hence fishermen as well as beach-loungers ought to be staying away, according to an alert from the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA).
- There is a strong indication that high energy swell waves, with heights between 2 m and 3 m and periods between 17-22 seconds are likely to be experienced in the seas around India.
- **About Swell Waves:**
- 'Swell waves' are massive ripples that form on the sea due to winds coming from as far away as Madagascar. "They might appear to be tsunami-like waves but have completely different characteristics,"

### **GI Tag for Warangal Dhurries:**

There's a ripple of excitement and sliver of hope in Warangal's artisan community as word spreads on the Geographical Indication certificate given on March 28 by the Chennai-based GI Registry for Warangal dhurries.

### **About Warangal Dhurries:**

The shatranji carpets and jainamaaz prayer mats made in Warangal range in size from the smallest 2 feet by 3 feet to a massive 60 feet by 90 feet, examples of which are seen in some museums.

Bright colours, geometrically repetitive patterns and interlocking zigzag motifs in cotton and jute are the signature styles of the carpets.

One of the newest innovations by the weavers here is an adaptation of tie-dyed ikat techniques and hand-painted or block-printed kalamkari designs for the dhurries to save time and energy.

### **Recently Geographical Indication (GI) tag was granted to:**

- o Banaganapalle mangoes of Andhra Pradesh.
- o Tulaipanji rice of West Bengal.
- o Gobindobhog rice of West Bengal.
- o Banglar rosogulla of West Bengal.



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o Stone sculptures of Mamallapuram.

- Durgi stone carvings and Etikoppaka toys of Andhra Pradesh.

o Pochampally Ikat of Telangana.

o Chakshesang shawl of Nagaland

### **About GI Tag:**

A **geographical indication (GI)** is a name or sign used on products which corresponds to a specific geographical location or origin (e.g. a town, region, or country).

The use of a geographical indication may act as a certification that the product possesses certain qualities, is made according to traditional methods, or enjoys a certain reputation, due to its geographical origin.

The GI tag ensures that none other than those registered as authorised users (or at least those residing inside the geographic territory) are allowed to use the popular product name. [Darjeeling tea](#) became the first [GI tagged](#) product in India, in 2004-05, since then by May 2017, 295 had been added to the list. These are listed below.



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## **General studies-2**

### **Education Related Issues:**

#### **Study in India portal**

'Study in India' portal ([www.studyinindia.gov.in](http://www.studyinindia.gov.in)) of HRD Ministry will be launched at the India Habitat Centre on Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2018 by the Minister of External Affairs, Smt. Sushma Swaraj .

The portal will enable students from 30 countries across South Asia, Africa, CIS and Middle East to select and apply for different courses from 150 select Indian institutions which are high on NAAC and NIRF ranking.

The Study in India is aimed at making India a preferred destination for the foreign students to pursue their education.

The Event will also include the launch of Study in India film along with a Cultural event by the foreign students.

Ambassadors and representatives from across 80 countries have been invited to remain present at the launch of the event.

#### ***What is NIRF?***

The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) outlines a methodology to rank institutions across the country.

- The parameters for ranking broadly cover "Teaching, Learning and Resources," "Research and Professional Practices," "Graduation Outcomes," "Outreach and Inclusivity," and "Perception".
- The 2018 rankings include nine different categories-overall, universities, engineering, colleges, management, pharmacy, medical, architecture, and law. Out of which ***sections like medical, architecture and law have been introduced this year.***

### **Health Related Issues**

#### **POSHAN Abhiyaan**



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### **Why in News?**

First meeting of National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges under POSHAN Abhiyaan is being held today.

The mandate of the National Council on India's Nutritional Challenges is as under:

(a) Provide policy directions to address India's nutritional challenges through coordinated inter-sectoral action.

(b) Coordinate and review convergence between Ministries.

(c) Review programmes for nutrition on a quarterly basis.

The Council will submit its report to the Prime Minister every 6 months.

### **About Poshan Abhiyaan:**

- The POSHAN Abhiyaan targets reduction in the level of under-nutrition and other related problems by ensuring convergence of various nutrition related schemes.
- It will monitor and review implementation of all such schemes and in this endeavour, the *Abhiyaan* seeks to utilize existing structural arrangements of line Ministries wherever available.
- The Abhiyaan targets to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls) and reduce low birth weight by 2%, 2%, 3% and 2% per annum respectively.
- The target of the mission is to bring down stunting among children in the age group 0-6 years from 38.4% to 25% by 2022.



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### **International Relations:**

#### **U.S.-India Strategic Energy Partnership**

Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas Dharmendra Pradhan and U.S. Secretary of Energy Rick Perry co-chaired the inaugural meeting here today of the U.S.-India Strategic Energy Partnership, which President Donald J. Trump and Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced during their June 26, 2017 Summit in Washington, D.C.

The Partnership affirms the strategic importance of energy cooperation to the U.S.-India bilateral relationship and sets the stage for deeper and more meaningful engagements through government and industry channels.

Through the Partnership, the United States and India collectively seek to enhance energy security, expand energy and innovation linkages across our respective energy sectors, bolster our strategic alignment, and facilitate increased industry and stakeholder engagement in the energy sector.

Under the Partnership, the United States and India will pursue four primary pillars of cooperation:

- (1) Oil and Gas;
- (2) Power and Energy Efficiency;
- (3) Renewable Energy and Sustainable Growth; and
- 4) Coal.

As a first step in realizing the full potential of the Strategic Energy Partnership, the United States and India are pleased to announce the U.S.-India Natural Gas Task Force.

The Task Force provides a team of U.S. and Indian industry experts with a mandate to propose, develop, and convey, innovative policy recommendations to Government of India in support of its vision for natural gas in the economy of India.



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The work of the Task Force is expected to advance the strategic and economic interests of both the United States and India.

### **Integration of e-SANAD portal and NAD – National Academic Depository**

Union External Affairs Minister, Smt Sushma Swaraj and Minister of State for HRD, Dr. Satya Pal Singh jointly launched the Study in India programme of HRD Ministry by launching the 'Study in India' portal at the India Habitat Centre in New Delhi today. The integration of e-SANAD portal and NAD – National Academic Depository (of HRD Ministry), was also launched by Smt Sushma Swaraj on the occasion.

#### ***What is e-SANAD?***

**e-Sanad** is a project aimed at online submission/verification of documents with an ultimate object to extend contact less, cashless, faceless and paperless document attestation service for apostille and normal attestation to applicants in India (to be extended to Indians residing abroad as well in a phased manner).

It is designed and developed by NIC. Any type of document viz personal, educational or commercial can be authenticated/apostilled using e-Sanad.

The document should be available in the digital repository for getting attestation/apostille through e-Sanad. The e-Sanad service will start with CBSE depository (documents of years 2014 & onwards) and verification of these CBSE documents would be done online.

#### ***About National Academic Depository (NAD):***

National Academic Depository (NAD) is a 24X7 online store house of all academic awards viz. certificates, diplomas, degrees, mark-sheets etc. duly digitised and lodged by academic institutions / boards / eligibility assessment bodies.

- The UGC has signed a tripartite agreement with NSDL Database Management Limited (NDML) and CDSL Ventures Limited (CVL) for operationalising NAD.
- NAD not only ensures easy access to and retrieval of an academic award but also validates and guarantees its authenticity and safe storage.
- National Academic Depository comprises of two interoperable digital depositories viz. CDSL Ventures Limited (CVL) and NSDL Database Management Limited (NDML).



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### **Regional Workshop on Garbage Free Cities**

The 1<sup>st</sup> regional workshop on star rating of garbage-free cities, organized by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) in collaboration with the New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) was held today.

Along with the annual Swachh Survekshan activity, the star rating of garbage free cities will create a healthy competition among the cities across the countries to achieve the goals of cleanliness and 100% solid waste management.

The Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) focuses on two key objectives- eradication of open defecation and 100% scientific solid waste management (SWM) across all 4041 statutory towns and cities.

To continue the momentum on scientific management of solid waste and motivate cities to achieve more cleanliness, the Star-Rating Protocol of Garbage Free Cities was launched by MoHUA on January 20, 2018.

The 7-star rating is innovatively designed on a SMART (Single metric, Measurable, Achievable, Rigorous verification and Targeted towards outcomes) approach – making it the first-of-its kind rating tool for assessing cleanliness of cities and towns in India.

### **STAR RATING OF GARBAGE FREE CITIES -Parameters of star rating system**

It is a single metric rating system, based on 12 parameters:

1. Door-to- Door Collection
2. Segregation at source
3. Sweeping of public, commercial and residential areas (no visible eyesores on streets)
4. Waste Storage Bins, Litter Bins and material recovery facility
5. Bulk Waste Generators compliance
6. Scientific Waste Processing, Scientific Landfilling and C&D Waste Management
7. User Fees, Penalties, Spot Fines for littering and Enforcement of Ban on Plastic
8. Citizen grievance redressal and feedback system
9. Eradication of crude dumping of garbage and dump remediation



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10. Cleaning of storm drains and surface of water bodies
11. Waste Reduction
12. Visible beautification in the city.

**Key Features of 7-star rating-Designed on a SMART approach:**

- **SINGLE METRIC** - Rating criteria encapsulates all components of MSWM as well as plastic waste, waste in drains and water bodies
- **MEASURABLE** - Criteria under each star rating has measurable parameters (e.g.% of HHs covered by D2D collection, % of waste processed, etc.)
- **ACHIEVABLE** - Each criteria and associated parameter has been devised to ensure that it is realistically achievable by cities.
- **RIGOROUS VERIFICATION** - Robust 2-step verification mechanism of both self-declaration and third party verification. Cities rated 1, 2 and 4-star must carry out self-assessment and self-verification, while 3-star, 5-star and 7-star cities will need to be certified through an independent third party. Moreover, a city should be ODF before going for 3-star and above certification.
- **TARGETED TOWARDS OUTCOMES** – Based on verifiable outcomes rather than inputs and processes (e.g. remediation of dumpsites, regular sweeping, collection of user charges, etc.)

**Strengths of star rating protocol**

- Outcome-based tool rather than process based, hence will enable institutionalization of good practices such as source segregation, scientific waste processing, penalties & spot fines for littering, and compliance of bulk waste generators, etc.
- Designed to enable cities to gradually evolve into a model (7-star) city, with progressive improvements in their overall cleanliness.
- At the 7-star level, 3R components of 3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) incorporated.

**GITC-2018**

Global IT Challenge for Youth with Disabilities (GITC), 2018” will be held in New Delhi during 8<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> November, 2018.



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This event will have around 300 participants including 120 Youth with disabilities from 24 Asia Pacific countries.

#### **About the Event:**

GITC is being held every year in Asia- Pacific region and such events were held in the past in countries like Korea, China, Thailand, Vietnam etc.

This competition is amongst four categories of disabilities namely, Physical, Visual, Hearing and Intellectual.

The competition is a testing ground for individual as well as group competencies in the field of IT. Awards will be given to the most successful candidates from different categories of event.

#### **Benefits of Event:**

- This competition is expected to enrich further the IT skills of Youth with Disabilities further and help them emerge as future leaders.
- India is co-hosting the event alongwith Ministry of Health and Family Welfare,
- Government of Korea and its organising partners namely Rehabilitation International Korea and LG Group.
- The event will also have a Seminar for IT Forum in which the countries will present their work and achievement in ensuring accessibility to persons with disabilities in the IT sector.

DEPWD will also involve major stakeholders in this event, which would include Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Ministry of YouthAffairs and Sports and Ministry of Human Resource Development etc.

**General Studies-2** Union Minister for External Affairs Sushma Swaraj departed from New Delhi on Saturday morning for her six-day visit to China and Mongolia to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, which has been scheduled for April 24.

#### **e-Vidhan project**

Union Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, Statistics and Programme Implementation, Shri Vijay Goel inaugurated the new office of Central Project



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Monitoring Unit for the e-Vidhan project of the Government at the Parliament House Annexe.

This was done as a part of Swachhata Pakhwada being observed by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs from 16<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2018.

#### **About the Project:**

- e-Vidhan is a mission mode project to digitize and make the functioning of State Legislatures in India paperless.
- It is a part of the broader Digital India Programme of the Government and is likely to contribute to the cleanliness & environment by reducing the use of papers to a great extent.
- The Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs is the Nodal Ministry for the project. It is taking all the necessary steps for rolling out the Project in all the States at an early date.
- One of the key component of the strategy devised for implementation of the project is to create Project Monitoring Units both at Central as well as State levels.

#### **Impeachment of Chief Justice Of India**

Opposition parties, led by the Congress, on Friday met Vice-President and Rajya Sabha Chairman M. Venkaiah Naidu and handed over a notice for impeachment of Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dipak Misra.

Mr. Azad claimed to have 71 members supporting the motion.

According to the Constitution, a minimum of 50 members are required in Rajya sabha and 100 members in lok sabha to agree to the motion.

#### **How can Parliament impeach a judge, and a Chief Justice at that?**

Just like all other constitutional positions, the Chief Justice of India can also be impeached provided the necessary steps as laid out in the Constitution are taken.

This is not the first time impeachment has been mentioned in the same sentence as a sitting **judge**.

Justice V. Ramaswami was the first judge against whom impeachment proceedings were initiated.



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### **How will they go about it?**

This is where the Constitution comes in. Article 124(4) of the Constitution of India states: "A Judge of the **Supreme Court** shall not be removed from his office except by an order of the President passed after an address by each House of Parliament supported by a majority of the total membership of that House and by a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting has been presented to the President in the same session for such removal on the ground of proved misbehaviour or incapacity."

100 Lok Sabha MPs or 50 Rajya Sabha MPs is the minimum number of signatories required to issue the notice.

### **Who gets this notice and what should they do?**

The notice has to be handed over either to the Speaker if it is from Lok Sabha MPs or to the Chairman if it is Rajya Sabha MPs. The Chairman of the Rajya Sabha is the Vice President of India.

If and when the motion is admitted, the Speaker or the Chairman will have to constitute a three-member committee to investigate the charges levelled against the Supreme Court judge.

This committee will consist of a senior Supreme Court judge, a High Court judge and a 'distinguished jurist' — who is a highly qualified law professor who has been appointed as a Supreme Court judge by the President of India.

### **What happens next?**

The three-member committee has to support the motion for it to be sent back to the House where it was introduced.

In the House, it has to be discussed and passed with a special majority — not less than two-thirds. This means, in case of a full House seated, at least 364 Members should be have voted for the motion in the Lok Sabha, and 164 Members in the Rajya Sabha.

This will then pass on to the other House where it has to be passed by special majority again.

Once it passes both the Houses of Parliament, the President can be approached to remove the Chief Justice of India.



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## **International Relations:**

### **India-SCO**

Union Minister for External Affairs Sushma Swaraj departed from New Delhi on Saturday morning for her six-day visit to China and Mongolia to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, which has been scheduled for April 24 in Qingdao, China.

These are the first SCO meetings after India and Pakistan were admitted into the eight-member group in which China and Russia play an influential role. The events will be attended by the respective Ministers from Pakistan.

### **About SCO.**

The **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)** is a [Eurasian](#) political, economic, and security organisation, the creation of which was announced on 15 June 2001 in [Shanghai, China](#) by the leaders of [China](#), [Kazakhstan](#), [Kyrgyzstan](#), [Russia](#), [Tajikistan](#), and [Uzbekistan](#); the *Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Charter* was signed in June 2002 and entered into force on 19 September 2003. These countries, except for Uzbekistan, had been members of the **Shanghai Five** group, founded on 26 April 1996 in Shanghai. [India](#) and [Pakistan](#) joined SCO as full members on 9 June 2017 at a [summit](#) in [Astana, Kazakhstan](#).

Afghanistan, Belarus, Mongolia and Iran are observer states.

### **Civil Services Day**

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, today addressed Civil Servants on the occasion of Civil Services Day. He said the occasion is one of Appreciation, Evaluation and Introspection. He described the Prime Minister's Award as a step towards motivating civil servants, and congratulated the awardees. He said the awards also indicate the priorities of the Government.

### ***About the Civil Services Day:***

- The Government of India celebrates April 21 every year as 'Civil Services day' as an occasion for the civil servants to rededicate themselves to the cause of citizen and renew their commitments to public service and excellence in work.



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- This date is chosen to commemorate the day when first Home Minister of Independent India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel addressed the probationers of Administrative Services Officers in 1947 at Metcalf House, Delhi.
- As part of Civil Servant Day, Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration are presented to Districts/Implementing Units for implementation of Priority programme and innovation categories.

### **Fugitive Economic Offenders Ordinance**

#### **Why in News?**

President Ram Nath Kovind on Sunday night promulgated Fugitive Economic Offenders Ordinance that will allow the government to confiscate properties and assets of loan defaulters who flee the country.

#### **About the Ordinance:**

- The provisions of the ordinance will apply for economic offenders who refuse to return, persons against whom an arrest warrant has been issued for a scheduled offence as well as willful bank loan defaulters with outstanding of over ₹100 crore.
- It provides for confiscating assets even without a conviction and paying off lenders by selling off the fugitive's properties.
- Such economic offenders will be tried under Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).
- The ordinance defines a fugitive economic offender as a person against whom an arrest warrant has been issued for committing offence like counterfeiting government stamps or currency, cheque dishonour for insufficiency of funds, money laundering, and transactions defrauding creditors.

According to the ordinance, a director or deputy director (appointed under the PMLA, 2002) may file an application before a special court (designated under the 2002 Act) to declare a person as a fugitive economic offender.

Appeals against the orders of the special court will lie before the high court.

### **National Commission of Minorities:**

#### **Why in News?**



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The National Commission for Minorities (NCM) has decided to approach the government for granting it Constitutional status to protect the rights of minority communities more effectively.

If granted such a status, the NCM will be able to act against errant officials who do not attend hearings, follow its order or are found guilty of dereliction of duty,

In its present form, the NCM has powers to summon officials, including chief secretaries and director generals of police, but has to rely on departments concerned to take action against them

Earlier, the Standing Committee on Social Justice and Empowerment (2017-18), in its 53rd report noted that the NCM is "almost ineffective" in its current state to deal with cases of atrocities against minorities. The committee recommended constitutional status to the body "without any delay".

### **About NCM:**

- The Union Government set up the **National Commission for Minorities** (NCM) under the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992.
- Six religious communities, viz; Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians (Parsis) and Jains have been notified in Gazette of India as minority communities by the Union Government all over India

The NCM adheres to the [United Nations](#) Declaration of 18 December 1992 which states that "States shall protect the existence of the National or Ethnic, Cultural, Religious and Linguistic identity of minorities within their respective territories and encourage conditions for the promotion of that identity

The Commission shall consist of

- a Chairperson,
- a Vice Chairperson and
- Five Members to be nominated by the Central Government from amongst persons of eminence, ability and integrity; provided that five members including the Chairperson shall be from amongst the minority communities.



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## **National Pension Scheme:**

### **Why in News?**

The total assets under management (AUM) of the pension fund players — operating under the National Pension System (NPS) and regulated by the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) — have increased 38 per cent to Rs 2.40 lakh crore in 2017-18.

### **About NPS:**

National Pension Scheme (NPS) is a government-sponsored pension scheme. It was launched in January 2004 for government employees.

However, in 2009, it was opened to all sections including NRI's.

The scheme allows subscribers to contribute regularly in a pension account during their working life.

On retirement, subscribers can withdraw a part of the corpus in a lumpsum and use the remaining corpus to buy an annuity to secure a regular income after retirement.

Any Indian citizen between 18 and 60 years can join NPS. The only condition is that the person must comply with know your customer (KYC) norms.

### **AFSPA:**

### **Why in News?**

The Union Home Ministry on Monday completely revoked the controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act from Meghalaya while diluting it in other regions of Arunachal Pradesh.

Till September 2017, 40 per cent of Meghalaya was under AFSPA. However, after recent review in consultations with the state government, AFSPA was removed completely from Meghalaya

### **What is AFSPA?**

Afspa, which was enacted in 1958 amid the nascent Naga insurgency, gives powers to the army and state and central police forces to shoot to kill, search houses and destroy



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any property that is "likely" to be used by insurgents in areas declared as "disturbed" by the home ministry.

Security forces can "arrest without warrant" a person, who has committed or even "about to commit a cognizable offence" even on "reasonable suspicion". It also protects them from legal processes for actions taken under the act.

**Which states are under AFSPA?**

It is in force in Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Nagaland, Manipur (except the Imphal municipal area).

In Arunachal Pradesh, only the Tirap, Changlang and Longding districts plus a 20-km belt bordering Assam come under its purview.

And in Meghalaya AFSPA was confined to a 20-km area bordering Assam.

**What are 'disturbed' areas?**

The state or central government considers those areas as 'disturbed' "by reason of differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities."

**How is a region declared 'disturbed'?**

Section (3) of the Afspa empowers the governor of the state or Union territory to issue an official notification in The Gazette of India, following which the Centre has the authority to send in armed forces for civilian aid.

Once declared 'disturbed', the region has to maintain status quo for a minimum of three months, according to The Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1976.

**What is state government's role?**

The state governments can suggest whether the act is required to be enforced or not. But under Section (3) of the act, their opinion can be overruled by the governor or the Centre.



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### **International Relations:**

#### **Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS)**

The 6<sup>th</sup> edition of Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and Conclave of Chiefs is being hosted by Iran at Tehran from 23 to 25 April 2018. The Chief of the Naval Staff is leading a four member Indian delegation for the event.

#### **About IONS:**

- The IONS was conceived by the Indian Navy in 2008.
- The forum seeks to enhance maritime cooperation among navies of the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region by providing an open and inclusive forum for discussion on regionally relevant maritime issues that would lead to common understanding on the way ahead.
- The inaugural edition of IONS was held in February 2008 at New Delhi, with Indian Navy as the Chair for two years. This was followed by UAE from 2010 - 2012, South Africa from 2012 - 2014, Australia from 2014 - 2016 and Bangladesh from 2016 - 2018.

The IONS Charter of Business was agreed upon by the Conclave of Chiefs and brought into effect in February 2014. A relatively young forum, barely in its 10<sup>th</sup> year of existence, it has grown into a formidable organisation with 23 members and 09 observers. As the founder nation, India will also be conducting commemorative activities in November 2018 at Kochi, for celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary this year.

#### **SC notice to Govt. on Section 377**

The Supreme Court on Monday asked the government to respond to a plea by a hotelier to strike down the colonial Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code which criminalises homosexuality.

#### **Background:**

A plea was filed by the Lalit Suri hospitality group head Kesav Suri, seeking the 'Right to choice of sexual orientation' to be declared as part of the fundamental right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.

#### **Earlier SC Judgement:**



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On January 8, the three-judge Bench decided to re-visit a December 2013 verdict of the Supreme Court in *Suresh Kumar Kaushal versus Naz Foundation*, which dismissed the LGBT community as a negligible part of the population while virtually denying them the right of choice and sexual orientation.

The court said a section of people cannot live in fear of a law which atrophies their right to choice and natural sexual inclinations.

It said societal morality changes with time and the law should change pace with life, adding that the concept of consensual sex may require more protection.

While the court noted that Section 377 punishes carnal intercourse against order of nature, it added that "the determination of order of nature is not a common phenomenon. Individual autonomy and individual natural inclination cannot be atrophied unless the restrictions are determined as reasonable".

It observed that what is natural for one may not be natural for the other, but the confines of law cannot trample or curtail the inherent rights embedded with an individual under Article 21 (right to life).

### **Rashtriya Gramin Swaraj Abhiyan**

#### **Why in News?**

The Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will visit Mandla in Madhya Pradesh tomorrow, 24<sup>th</sup> April on the National Panchayati Raj Day. He will launch the Rashtriya Gramin Swaraj Abhiyan, at a public meeting, and address Panchayati Raj representatives across the country, from Mandla.

#### **About the Abhiyan**

The Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan will strengthen the Panchayati Raj system across the country and address critical gaps that constrain its success. RGSA seeks to:

- Enhance capacities and effectiveness of Panchayats and the Gram Sabhas;
- Enable democratic decision-making and accountability in Panchayats and promote people's participation;
- Strengthen the institutional structure for knowledge creation and capacity building of Panchayats;
- Promote devolution of powers and responsibilities to Panchayats according to the spirit of the Constitution and PESA Act;



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- Strengthen Gram Sabhas to function effectively as the basic forum of peoples participation, transparency and accountability within the Panchayat system;
- Create and strengthen democratic local self-government in areas where Panchayats do not exist;
- Strengthen the constitutionally mandated framework on which Panchayats are founded.



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## **General Studies-3**

### **DARPAN-PLI App launched**

With a view to achieve total digitisation of postal operations in the country, under the IT Modernisation Plan, Department of Posts has launched **DIGITAL ADVANCEMENT OF RURAL POST OFFICE FOR A NEW INDIA (DARPAN)** Project, which aims to connect all 1.29 lakh Rural Branch Post Offices in the country, to enable them to do online Postal and Financial Transactions.

Hand held devices with SIM connectivity and solar power backup are being installed in all Branch Post Offices in the Country.

The total Project cost is more than Rs.1300 crores. 61,941 Branch Post Offices have been rolled out under DARPAN Project.

The DARPAN-PLI App, launched by Hon'ble Minister of State (I/C) for Communications and Minister of State for Railways today, will help in collection of premium for PLI and RPLI policies at Branch Post Offices anywhere in India, with online updation of the policies.

Further, with launch of this App, indexing of maturity claims in respect of PLI and RPLI policies can be done at Branch Post Office itself, upon which the customer will immediately be provided with the request number for further references.

These two initiatives will help Department of Posts in providing better after-sales service to customers of PLI and RPLI, particularly those living in rural areas of the country.



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## **TESS mission**

### **Why in News?**

An 11th- hour technical glitch prompted SpaceX to postpone its planned launch on Monday of a new NASA space telescope designed to detect worlds beyond our solar system.

### **About TESS**

- The two-year, \$337 million TESS mission is designed to build on the work of its predecessor, the Kepler space telescope, which has discovered the bulk of some 3,700 exoplanets documented during the past 20 years and is running out of fuel.
- NASA expects to pinpoint thousands more previously unknown worlds, perhaps hundreds of them Earth-sized or "super-Earth"-sized — no larger than twice as big as our home planet.
- Those are believed the most likely to feature rocky surfaces or oceans, and are thus considered the best candidates for life to evolve.
- Scientists said they hope TESS will ultimately help catalog at least 100 more rocky exoplanets for further study in what has become one of astronomy's newest fields of exploration.

TESS will concentrate on stars called red dwarfs, smaller, cooler and longer-lived than our sun. Red dwarfs also have a high propensity for Earth-sized, presumably rocky planets, making them potentially fertile ground for further scrutiny.

### **Plastic Eating Enzyme discovered:**

Scientists in Britain and the United States say they have engineered a plastic-eating enzyme that could in future help in the fight against **pollution**.

The enzyme, which is biodegradable, is able to digest polyethylene terephthalate, or PET — a form of plastic patented in the 1940s and now used in millions of tonnes of plastic bottles. PET **plastics** can persist for hundreds of years in the environment and currently pollute large areas of land and sea worldwide.



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### **Chandrayaan-2 Mission**

The Chairman Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) & Secretary Department of Space, Dr K Sivan briefed Union Minister Dr.Jitendra Singh about the upcoming Moon mission "Chandrayaan-2", expected to be launched from Sriharikota around October-November this year.

Giving details about the upcoming Chandrayaan-2 mission, Dr Sivan informed that the total cost of the mission is about Rs. 800 crore, which includes Rs. 200 crore as the cost of launching and Rs. 600 crore for the satellite.

This cost, he said, is almost half of the launch cost if the same mission had to be launched from a foreign launching site.

### **About Chandrayaan-2**

Chandrayaan-2 will be equipped with a lander and rover probe, which will descend on the surface of the moon, from where it will observe the lunar surface and send back data, which will be useful for analysis of the lunar soil.

### **Indian Science, Technology and Engineering Facilities Map (I-STEM) Portal**

Soon researchers in any college or institution and research organisations can check, reserve and have easy access to even expensive research equipment and facilities anywhere in India, thanks to the efforts by the Centre for Nano Science and Engineering (CeNSE) at the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru.

The centre is in the process of collating information about scientific and research equipment and facilities available at academic institutions and research organisations across the country.

### **About The Portal:**

- The portal — Indian Science, Technology and Engineering Facilities Map (I-STEM) — will soon become operational. The government green signalled the project last month.
- The institutions and organisations that have the equipment and facilities will provide access to researchers for both academic and non-academic work through an online reservation system.



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### **Benefits of Portal:**

It will provide access to researchers to any equipment or facility that has been procured using public funds, the equipment will be better utilised and it will avoid duplication of expensive equipment as much as possible

Sharing expensive equipment can bring down the cost of doing research in India.

They are trying to replicate the Indian Nanoelectronic Users Programme (INUP) model at CeNSE and IIT Bombay that has been in operation since 2008 to provide access to sophisticated device fabrication and analytical equipment to any academic researcher in the country. I-STEM is inspired by positive experience with INUP.

### **Norms regarding CRZ to be relaxed:**

The Centre has allowed India's coasts to be made more accessible to tourism and industrial infrastructure and given individual States considerable leeway to decide how they should plan such development, according to a draft version of the proposed modification to India's coastal regulation zone plan made public on the Environment Ministry website on Wednesday.

### **What is Coastal Regulation Zone(CRZ)?**

The coastal regulation zone, or CRZ, 2011, refers to regions in the proximity of India's 7000-km-long shoreline where buildings, tourism facilities, industrial projects, residential facilities etc are highly regulated.

In most cases it begins from the high tide line (HTL) to about 500 metres towards the landward side. The zone is subdivided into regions, with varying leeway for infrastructure development, depending on population and ecological sensitivity.

The CRZ-1, for instance, includes the most ecologically sensitive areas and according to current laws is off-limits for tourism activities and infrastructure development except for defence, strategic and rare public utilities projects.

### **Changes made in new CRZ notification:**

According to the new CRZ, 2018 notification "nature trails and eco-tourism activities.." may be permitted in CRZ-1 regions provided they conform to state-approved coastal zone management plans.



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The current law, called the CRZ, 2011 also defines as 'coastal zone,' the region from the HTL to 100 m of the creek along 'tidal-influenced bodies' such as bays, estuaries, rivers, backwaters, lagoons and ponds etc. that are connected to the sea. The proposed laws relax this to 50 metres.

Earlier, rural habitations or relatively undisturbed areas close to the shore, called CRZ-II, possessed a 200 metre 'no development zone'. This has now been reduced to 50 metres, provided the area has a population density exceeding 2161 per square kilometre as per the 2011 Census.

### **Concerns Raised:**

Environmentalists say that the new regulations have been framed without a transparent public consultation process.

A committee headed by Shailesh Nayak, former secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, had framed a report to reconsider the limits of the existing coastal zone regulations.

The report however wasn't made public by the Environment Ministry. "It was only after several Right to Information requests that the policy was made available and that too, after pressure from the Central Information Commissioner," said Kanchi Kohli, researcher at the Centre for Policy Research.

### **High Security Registration Plates (HSRP) Mandatory**

From January 1, 2019 onward, all classes of motor vehicles hitting the roads will come fitted with tamper-proof High Security Registration Plates (HSRP) that have a host of in-built security features.

They are expected to offer increased protection against theft.

The HSRP was first made mandatory in some States 13 years ago but failed to take off.

### **About HSRP's:**

HSRPs will come with a 15-year guarantee.

They will have in-built security features such as a self-destructive sticker with the engine and chassis number of the vehicle.



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The plates will be fitted on the front and rear of the vehicles and windscreens will have a number plate tag with hologram.

A permanent identification number with a minimum of 10 digits will be laser-branded into the reflective sheeting on the bottom left of the registration plate.

The permanent number will be preceded by two alphabets indicating the name of the vendor, manufacturer, or supplier, for whom the Type approval certificate was issued by the testing agencies.

The registration plate fitted in the rear of the vehicle will be fastened with a non-removable/non-reusable snap lock system.

For enhanced security, two snap locks will be used in the HSRP affixed in the rear. The replacement of an existing registration plate will also be done through the agency responsible for affixing the new plate.

### **First Ever International SME Convention-2018 in New Delhi**

One hundred and fifty participants from 31 countries and 400 entrepreneurs from India will participate in the four day International SME convention being held in New Delhi from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> April.

The Ministry of MSME has engaged with over 35 International Trade Development organisations to attract and invite able and willing entrepreneurs and encourage people to people contact with select Indian Entrepreneurs from key sectors of the International counterparts.

The convention has specific focus on inclusion of MSMEs in the Make in India program & empowering women entrepreneurs.

The MoMSME recognizing the potential of sustainable Indian SMEs in collaborating with International Companies not only for setting up manufacturing operations in India but also for utilizing the reach and market access of International Counterparts for promoting and exporting Made in India products and services.



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Need was felt to create a platform which could allow Entrepreneur – to – Entrepreneur exchange of ideas, free and fair business discussions, mutual sizing of opportunities and ways to address them.

#### **About MSME's:**

India is home to more than 60 million MSMEs, majority of who are in low-tech areas and serve the local domestic markets.

Of these, a small percentage, have the ability and capability to derive access to International Markets, with the vast majority of enterprises working as ancillaries.

Together the MSMEs constitute a single largest employer after the Agriculture sector in India. Highly developed economies have banked on their small and medium enterprises for both GDP Growth as well as higher employment resulting in higher per capita incomes.

#### **Cybersecurity Tech Accord.**

A group of 34 major tech companies, including Cisco, Facebook, Microsoft, HP, RSA, and Oracle, have signed the [Cybersecurity Tech Accord](#).

#### **About the Accord:**

This accord promises to establish partnerships to share vulnerabilities, provide consumers with better ways to protect themselves, and refuse to assist governments in carrying out state sponsored cyberattacks.

Regarding partnerships, the companies seek to build relationships with major players in the cybersecurity field to share vulnerabilities and threats as well as improve technical collaboration.

The accord mentions that cyberattacks could potentially cost around \$8 trillion by 2022 and can hurt small businesses, [governments](#), and [hospitals](#). To assist in this partnership, big security companies like RSA, Avast, FireEye, and Symantec have pledged their support for the accord.

The companies made commitments in four areas.



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#### **Stronger defense**

The companies will mount a stronger defense against cyberattacks. As part of this, recognizing that everyone deserves protection, the companies pledged to protect all customers globally regardless of the motivation for attacks online.

#### **No offense**

The companies will not help governments launch cyberattacks against innocent citizens and enterprises, and will protect against tampering or exploitation of their products and services through every stage of technology development, design and distribution.

#### **Capacity building**

The companies will do more to empower developers and the people and businesses that use their technology, helping them improve their capacity for protecting themselves.

#### **Collective action**

The companies will build on existing relationships and together establish new formal and informal partnerships with industry, civil society and security researchers to improve technical collaboration, coordinate vulnerability disclosures, share threats and minimize the potential for malicious code to be introduced into cyberspace.

#### **Defence planning committee**

[Defence planning committee](#), which will include service chiefs and heads of important ministries — chaired by National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval — is set to be created.

#### ***Functions of the committee:***

- Prepare drafts of national security strategy and doctrines, international defence engagement strategy and roadmap to build defence manufacturing ecosystem.
- Work on strategy to boost defence exports, and prioritised capability development plans for the armed forces.
- Analyse and evaluate all relevant inputs relating to defence planning and foreign policy imperatives besides focusing on defence acquisition and infrastructure development plans including the 15-year-long integrated perspective plan.
- Work on development of Indian defence industry and technology advancements.



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### **Benefits:**

- First, the chair of the committee, Doval, is a person of formidable capability, who as NSA is one of the few with an overarching knowledge of the direction of the country's national security needs.
- The fact that he is a highly trusted aide to the prime minister helps considerably. Heads of ministries or their representatives are less likely to oppose and delay decision making when there oversight at such levels.
- The inclusion of all the relevant ministries in the committee will permit 'across the table decision making' up to a point.

Considering the complex security environment and volume of expenditure on national defence, it was imperative to have strong defence planning mechanism.

### **Centre extends ceasefire for one more year with NSCN/NK and NSCN/R**

A ceasefire is in operation between Government of India, National Socialist Council of Nagaland – Neopao Konyak/Kitovi (NSCN/NK) and National Socialist Council of Nagaland – Reformation (NSCN/R).

It was decided to extend the Suspension of Operation with NSCN/NK and NSCN/R for a further period of one year with effect from 28<sup>th</sup> April, 2018, i.e till 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2019.

### **About NSCN**

The **National Socialist Council of Nagaland** ([abbreviated NSCN](#)) is a Greater Naga Revolutionary, Christian [Naga nationalist insurgent group](#) operating mainly in [Northeast India](#), with minor activities in northwest [Myanmar](#) (Burma) until 2012.

The main goal of the organisation is to establish a sovereign Naga state, "Nagalim" which would consist of all the areas inhabited by the [Naga people](#) in Northeast India and Northwest [Myanmar](#).

According to the NSCN manifesto, their slogan is "Nagaland for Christ". The group reportedly indulges in kidnapping, assassination and committing terrorist activities.

NSCN (Reformation) was officially formed in April this year after two of it's founders Wangtin Naga and P. Tikhak were expelled from the NSCN(Khaplang), reportedly due to



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some misunderstanding that arose over the recent abrogation of NSCN(Khaplang) ceasefire with the Government of India.

It became the first group of National Socialist Council of Nagalim (NSCN) to support the Naga Peace Accord, in 2015.

### **Sunderban to get Ramsar tag**

The Sunderban Reserve Forest, spread of 4,260 sq. km. with over 2,000 sq. km. of mangrove forests and creeks, is likely to be declared a Ramsar Site soon.

Being conferred the status of a wetland of international importance will not only be a matter of pride for the Sunderbans but also bring a lot of international scientific attention and intervention to the area.

### **About Sunderban Reserve:**

The Indian Sunderbans, with 2,114 sq. km. of mangrove forests, comprise almost 43% of the mangrove cover in the country according to a 2017 Forest Survey of India report.

Other than the forests, home to about 100 Royal Bengal tigers, the creeks and river systems of the Sunderbans are also part of the reserve forest and once conferred a Ramsar site status, it will be the largest protected wetland in the country.

Other than threats such as climate change, sea level rise, widespread construction and clearing of mangrove forests for fisheries is posing a danger to the Sunderbans.

### **About Ramsar Sites:**

A **Ramsar Site** is a [wetland](#) site designated of international importance under the [Ramsar Convention](#).

The Convention on Wetlands, known as the Ramsar Convention, is an intergovernmental environmental treaty established in 1971 by [UNESCO](#), and coming into force in 1975. It provides for national action and international cooperation regarding the [conservation](#) of wetlands, and wise [sustainable use](#) of their resource.

Ramsar identifies wetlands of international importance, especially those providing [waterfowl habitat](#).



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In 2016 there are 2,231 Ramsar Sites, protecting 214,936,005 hectares (531,118,440 acres). 169 national governments are currently participating.

There are currently 26 sites in India recognised as Ramsar wetland sites of international importance, including the East Kolkata Wetlands also in West Bengal

### **Sulphur removal with Bacterial Help:**

Using novel bacterial strains, scientists have successfully removed sulphur from fossil fuels such as petroleum and coal.

Sulphur is one of the major pollutants emitted during the combustion of fossil fuels.

Scientists from CSIR-Institute of Minerals and Materials Technology (CSIR-IMMT) in Bhubaneswar used four bacterial strains that use dibenzothiophene (an organic sulphur compound which is a major contaminant of fossil fuel) as an energy source thereby getting rid of the sulphur.

The selected bacteria were grown in a medium supplemented with dibenzothiophene and other nutrients required for growth.

They found that four bacteria were able to use almost 99% of the sulphur compound in just 10 days

The new process is also eco-friendly and economical, and these new bacterial strains can be potentially explored for the removal of sulphur from fossil fuels on a commercial scale.

### **Earth Day**

#### **Why in News?**

'On EarthDay, PM addressing the nation asked to reaffirm our commitment towards creating a better planet for our future generations.

He asked to work together to mitigate the menace of climate change. This would be a great tribute to our beloved Mother Earth.



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### **About Earth Day**

**Earth Day** is an annual event celebrated on April 22.

Worldwide, various events are held to demonstrate support for [environmental protection](#).

First celebrated in 1970, Earth Day events in more than 193 countries. are now coordinated globally by the Earth Day Network.

This year focus is on beating plastic pollution.

### **Lunar "Gateway" program.**

#### **Why in News?**

National Aeronautics and Space Administration's (Nasa) goal of returning to the moon should see a major push in early 2019, when the agency awards its first contract for the lunar "Gateway" program.

#### **About the Programme:**

- The Lunar Orbital Platform-Gateway is Nasa's planned "staging" area intended for studies of the moon and the deep-space environment.
- Eventually, it will function as a way station for astronauts travelling to and from Mars.
- The Gateway would also further Nasa's goal of another human landing on the moon and will help determine whether water near the surface could be used to manufacture propellant for deep-space missions.
- The moon's gravity could also help a spacecraft reduce the blistering speeds used for six-month voyages back-and-forth to Mars, thus facilitating re-entry to Earth's atmosphere.
- Trips to the "gateway" will be aboard the Orion, a spacecraft being assembled by Lockheed Martin Corp., with the service module being supplied by the European Space Agency.
- The Orion's first flight, without crew, is scheduled for next year. The craft will serve as the command deck when it's docked with the platform.



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### **New Electronic Policy to be announced:**

In a bid to make India an export hub for **electronics**, the government plans to set up at least one SEZ or special economic zone in every State under the proposed electronic policy.

The new policy will focus on making India an export hub," a senior IT Ministry official said. "It has been proposed that at least one mega SEZ be set up in each state, with emphasis on coastal economic zones.

Under the new policy, which was earlier expected to be out by March 2018, the government also plans to sign free trade agreements (FTAs) with countries, including those in Africa and Europe, to which India can export smaller electronic products

NITI Aayog also recommended that Coastal Economic Zones (CEZs) be set up, similar to what China has done. Pointing out that India's numerous SEZs have not taken off in the way they did in China due to issues such as size and location, the Aayog had said large areas near the coast can be set aside for CEZs.

India has set a target of net zero imports in electronics by 2020, in the meeting of which the new policy will play a crucial role.

### **Coastal Economic Zone (CEZ)**

- CEZs are spatial economic regions comprising group of coastal districts or districts with strong linkage to ports in region to tap into synergies with planned industrial corridor projects.
- These zones are expected to provide business-friendly ecosystem including ease of doing business, ease of exporting and importing, swift decisions on applications for environmental clearances and speedy water and electricity connections.

### **Key Facts**

- CEZ will be developed as part of plan for developing 14 such industrial clusters to spur manufacturing and generate jobs.
- The plan envisages total investment of Rs 15,000 crore in first phase and creation of more than 1.5 lakh jobs.
- The idea is to attract large firms interested in serving export markets as they will bring with them capital, technology, good management practices and links to world markets.



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- This in turn will help create ecosystem around them in which productive small and medium firms will emerge and flourish.

**Environment & Biodiversity**

**Olive Ridley Turtles:**

**Why in News?**

The late recurrence of mass nesting of Olive Ridley turtles at the Rushikulya rookery coast in Odisha may be due to inter-rookery migration of these endangered marine reptiles.

While the turtles appeared for two spells of mass nesting at the Rushikulya rookery coast this year, they gave the Devi river mouth, another nesting site to the north of Rushikulya, a miss.

According to reptile experts, female Olive Ridelys have the capacity to store fertilised eggs inside their body for a long period ranging up to two years. They do not lay eggs if they do not find suitable location for the purpose.

**About Olive Ridley turtles:**

Also known as the Pacific ridley sea turtle, Olive turtles are a medium-sized species of sea turtle found in warm and tropical waters, primarily in the Pacific and Indian Oceans.

- They are best known for their behavior of synchronized nesting in mass numbers.
- The olive ridley is classified as Vulnerable according to the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), and is listed in Appendix I of CITES.
- The Convention on Migratory Species and the Inter-American Convention for the Protection and Conservation of Sea Turtles have also provided olive ridelys with protection, leading to increased conservation and management for this marine turtle.
- **India tops the Remittance flow Chart:**
- India retained the top position as a recipient of remittances with its diaspora sending about \$69 billion back home last year, the World Bank said on Monday.



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• **Observations by World Bank:**

- Remittances to India picked up sharply by 9.9%, reversing the previous year's dip, but were still short of \$70.4 billion received in 2014.
- In its latest Migration and Development Brief, the World Bank estimated that officially recorded remittances to low-and middle-income countries reached \$466 billion in 2017. This was an increase of 8.5% over \$429 billion in 2016.
- India continued to top in terms of receiving remittance, and was followed by China (\$64 billion), the Philippines (\$33 billion), Mexico (\$31 billion), Nigeria (\$22 billion) and Egypt (\$20 billion)
- The upsurge is likely to continue into 2018 on the back of stronger economic conditions in advanced economies (particularly the U.S.) and an increase in oil prices that should have a positive impact on the GCC countries.

• **Diu Smart City becomes first to run on 100% Renewable Energy during Daytime**

- **Diu Smart City** has become the first city in India, that runs on 100% renewable energy during daytime setting a new benchmark for other cities to become clean and green. Diu had been importing 73% of its power from Gujarat until last year.
- It has now adopted a two-pronged approach whereby a 9 MW solar park spread over 50 hectares rocky barren land has been developed besides installing solar panels on the roof tops on 79 government buildings thereby generating 1.3 MW annually.
- To further enhance its solar capacity, Diu offers its residents a subsidy of Rs 10,000-50,000 for installing 1-5KW roof top solar panels.
- Diu is saving about 13,000 tonnes of carbon emissions every year. Due to low-cost solar energy, power tariffs have been cut in residential category by 10% last year and 15% this year.

• **Environment Related:**

• **Neelakurinji bloom after 12 years in Munnar**

- Elaborate arrangements are in place for the Neelakurinji season that is set to begin from July-end.
- The main places under the Munnar Wildlife Sanctuary where massive flowering takes place are Eravikulam National Park (ENP), Lakkam and Vaguvarai top.



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- **About Neelakurinji Flowers:**

- Botanists call it the blooming of 'Strobilanthes kunthianus', the botanical name of Neelakurinji. *Neela* in local parlance translates to the colour blue and *Kurinji* is the local name for the flower.

This stellar phenomenon can be witnessed between the months of July 2018 and October 2018 when the flower blooms in all its glory unleashing a visual extravaganza. In fact, there is no better time to visit Munnar than when the Neelakurinji blooms en masse.

- **About Munnar hills:**

- The [Nilgiri Tahr](#), the endangered mountain goat, is endemic to these hills. The majestic mountain goat ambling down the hills that are swathed in Neelakurinji makes for an extremely enigmatic sight.
- The [Paliyan](#) tribal people living in Tamil nadu used it as a reference to calculate their age
- Besides the Western Ghats, Neelakurinji is also seen in the [Shevroys](#) in the [Eastern Ghats](#), Anamalai hills Idukki district and Agali hills in Palakad in Kerala and sandur hills of Bellary district in Karnataka.