



C.A From 17th November to 25th November 2018

General Studies-1

Qaumi Ekta Week

With a view to foster and reinforce the spirit of Communal Harmony, National Integration and pride in vibrant, composite culture and nationhood, the “Qaumi Ekta Week” (National Integration Week) will be observed all over the country, from tomorrow to 25th November, 2018.

Objectives:

- The observation of the ‘Qaumi Ekta Week’ will help to highlight the inherent strength and resilience of our nation to withstand actual and potential threats to the eclectic and secular fabric of our country.
- It will nurture a spirit of communal harmony in its widest sense.
- This occasion also provides an opportunity to reaffirm age old traditions and faith in the values of tolerance, co-existence and brotherhood in a multi-cultural and multi-religious society.

About NFCH

- The National Foundation for Communal Harmony (NFCH), is an autonomous organisation with the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- It organises Communal Harmony Campaign coinciding with the Qaumi Ekta Week and observes the Communal Harmony Flag Day on 25th November.
- The Foundation promotes Communal Harmony and strengthens National Integration.
- It also provides financial assistance for relief and rehabilitation of children rendered orphan or destitute in communal, caste, ethnic or terrorist violence.

New Fossil Evidence in Gujarat:

Tireless fossil hunting under the scorching heat of the Kutch basin, Gujarat proved fruitful — palaeontologists have unearthed a fossilised upper jaw (maxilla).

Further studies showed that the fossil find was highly significant: it is the oldest and the only known ape fossil discovered in peninsular India.

Who does it belong to?

- The researchers concluded that the upper jaw belonged to an adult ape (hominoid family), belonging to the genus Sivapithecus and lived about 11-10.8 million years ago (Miocene).



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- The oldest found remains of these apes are dated at about 12.7 million years in Indo-Pakistan and the youngest at about 8.6 million years.



- Fossils of the Sivapithecus genus have been previously unearthed near the Siwalik hill range, spreading across Pakistan, Churia Hills in Nepal and around the Himalayas [Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh].
- Now this finding, almost 1,000 km south from the previous finds has increased the geographic range of the genus”.
- “It also fills a time-window of approximately 11 million years in the evolutionary history of hominoid remains in India.”

About Sivapihecus:

- Researchers now believe that Sivapithecus is either more close to the modern orangutan of Southeast Asia or an ape that is part of an early radiation of fossil hominoids — the great apes, the chimps, gorillas and orangutans and also humans.
- The researchers note that as the unearthed jaw had a lot of iron in it due to its deposition in an iron-rich ancient soil, the radiation was not able to penetrate very deep into the specimen, thus preventing better analysis.



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- They hope that this finding will draw more attention to the region and more studies will be carried out in the future.
- By comparing the fossil with other available data on Sivapithecus genus, the authors speculate that the identified jaw could belong to a large-sized ape, attributed to one of the two species of Sivapithecus, hysudricus or sivalensis.

Earlier Discovery:

- Kutch is a paradise for fossils.
- Many associated mammal fossils belonging to the Miocene age have been discovered here in the past, including whales and sea cows.
- The new discovery will help us understand in detail the evolution of great apes.

Drought in Maharashtra: An Analysis:

What happened?

- At the end of October, the Maharashtra government declared [drought](#) in 151 taluks in 26 of 36 districts, mostly in the Marathwada region and in the north.
- Experts said rainfall had been below par in large swathes of the State and faulty water conservation methods had added to the problem.

How serious is it?

- The total number of villages affected by the drought — though the government has not shared figures — is likely to be more than 10,000.
- With water levels dipping in many areas, the government said this week that it is seeking ₹7,000 crore in Central assistance for drought mitigation, including crop loans for farmers, transport of water and arranging fodder for animals.

Which area is worst hit?

- As of November 16, water storage in all dams stood at 55.25% of the total capacity. On the same day last year, the storage was 73.91%.
- The Marathwada division is the worst affected region, with the total water storage down to 22.17%, as against 68.34% last year.
- The Nashik division (in north [Maharashtra](#)), too, has witnessed a drop in water levels to 58.56% from 83.23% last year. In the week starting November 12, Maharashtra had deployed 680 water tankers, supplying to 565 villages and 1,113 hamlets.



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Didn't it get enough rain?

- Though Maharashtra received 74.3% average rainfall, its scattered nature and concentration in particular areas harmed crops and affected water storage.

Aren't schemes helping?

- The government's Jalyukta Shikar scheme has come under the scanner, with experts alleging that it destroyed watersheds and natural streams.
- According to H.M. Desarda, former member of the State Planning Commission, the scheme is unscientific; also, its excessive focus on widening and deepening of streams and 'nullahs' benefits contractors rather than creating water storage.
- Ever increasing area under sugarcane cultivation and excessive use of water for this crop is also being blamed for the depleting ground and dam water.
- As per data, the total area under sugarcane in 2017-18 was 9.02 lakh hectares.
- As per initial estimates, the area increased to 11.62 lakh hectares in 2018-19.
- The increase is recorded in the now-drought affected regions of Aurangabad, Nanded and Ahmadnagar.
- With over 1.5 lakh hectares kharif area affected by drought and only 13% of the total area under rabi sowing being tilled, the crisis is likely to intensify further.

What lies in store?

- The announcement of drought will bring along some relief measures.
- For instance, land revenue won't be collected from farmers; they will get a 33% subsidy on the electricity bill for agriculture pumps, find work under the employment guarantee scheme, and get exemption from payment of school and college fees for children.
- They will get financial help, with the government likely to give ₹6,800 per hectare to those with non-irrigated farms and ₹13,000 per hectare to those with irrigated farms.

550th Birth Anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Devji

The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has passed a Resolution to celebrate the 550th Birth Anniversary of Shri Guru Nanak Devji, which falls next year, throughout the country and across the globe, in a grand and befitting manner along with State Governments and the Indian Missions abroad.

Guru Nanak Devji's teachings of love, peace, equality and brotherhood have eternal value.



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Extension of Norms for Mandatory Packaging in Jute Materials

Why in News?

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval to expand the scope of mandatory packaging norms under the Jute Packaging Material (JPM) Act, 1987 as follows:

- The CCEA approved that 100% of the food grains and 20% of the sugar shall be mandatorily packed in diversified jute bags. The decision to pack sugar in diversified jute bags will give an impetus to the diversification of the jute industry.
- Initially 10% of the indents of jute bags for packing foodgrains would be placed through reverse auction on the Gem portal. This will gradually usher in a regime of price discovery.

Impact:

- The decision will give a fillip to the development of jute sector; increasing the quality and productivity of raw jute, diversification of jute sector and also boosting and sustaining demand for jute product.
- This is important considering the fact that nearly 3.7 lakh workers and several lakh farm families are dependent for their livelihood on the jute sectors, the government has been making concerted efforts.
- The jute industry is predominantly dependent on Government sector which purchases jute bags of value of more than Rs. 6,500 crore every year for packing foodgrains. This is done in order to sustain the core demand for the jute sector and to support the livelihood of the workers and farmers dependent on the sector.
- The decision will benefit farmers and workers located in the Eastern and North Eastern regions of the country particularly in the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya and Tripura.

Measures by the Government to support the Jute Sector:

- In order to improve the productivity and quality of raw jute through a carefully designed intervention, called the Jute ICARE, the Government has been supporting close to one lakh jute farmers by disseminating improved agronomic practices such as line sowing using seed drills, weed management by using wheel-hoeing and nail-weeders, distribution of quality certified seeds and also providing microbial assisted retting.
- These interventions have resulted in enhancing the quality and productivity of raw jute and increasing income of jute farmers by Rs. 10,000 per hectare.



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- In this connection, to support jute farmers, Jute Corporation of India (JCI) has been given a grant of Rs. 100 crore for 2 years starting from 2018-19 to enable JCI to conduct MSP operations and ensure price stabilization in the jute sector.
- With a view to support diversification of jute sector, the National Jute Board has collaborated with National Institute of Design and a Jute Design Cell has been opened at Gandhinagar.
- Further, promotion of Jute Geo Textiles and Agro-Textiles has been taken up with the State Governments particularly those in the North Eastern region and also with departments such as Ministry of Road Transport and Ministry of Water Resources.
- With a view to boost demand in the jute sector, Government of India has imposed Definitive Anti-Dumping Duty on import of jute goods from Bangladesh and Nepal with effect from 5th January, 2017.

Outcome:

- As a result of these measures, 13 Twine mills in Andhra Pradesh had resumed operation, benefitting 20,000 workers.
- Further, imposition of Definitive Anti-Dumping Duty has provided scope for an additional demand of 2 lakh MT of jute goods in the domestic market for the Indian jute industry.
- With a view to promoting transparency in jute sector, Jute SMART, an e-govt initiative was launched in December, 2016, providing an integrated platform for procurement of B-Twill sacking by Government agencies.
- Further, the JCI is transferring 100% funds to jute farmers online for jute procurement under MSP and commercial operations.

NCST expresses serious concern over incident involving Us National in A&N Islands

What is the Issue?

- The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes has expressed serious concern over the news report regarding one US National feared killed by protected tribe sentinelese in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- Calling this incident as unfortunate, the Commission has sought immediate report from Ministry of Home Affairs as well as Andaman and Nicobar Administration.

Who are they?

- The Sentinelese, a negrito tribe who live on the North Sentinel Island of the Andamans, have not faced incursions and remain hostile to outsiders.



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- The inhabitants are connected to the Jarawa on the basis of physical, as well as linguistic similarities, researchers say.
- Based on carbon dating of kitchen middens by the Anthropological Survey of India, Sentinelese presence was confirmed in the islands to 2,000 years ago.
- Genome studies indicate that the Andaman tribes could have been on the islands even 30,000 years ago.

How are they protected?

- The Govt. of India issued the [Andaman and Nicobar Islands](#) (Protection of Aboriginal Tribes) Regulation, 1956 to declare the traditional areas occupied by the tribes as reserves, and prohibited entry of all persons except those with authorisation.
- Photographing or filming the tribe members is also an offence. The rules were amended later to enhance penalties.
- But restricted area permits were relaxed for some islands recently.

Have they made contact?

- The Sentinelese have been fiercely hostile to outside contact. But in 1991 they accepted some coconuts from a team of Indian anthropologists and administrators.
- Some researchers argue that the Sentinelese have been mostly left alone even from colonial times, unlike other tribes such as the Onges, Jarawas and Great Andamanese, because the land they occupy has little commercial attraction.

How many are there?

- From 1901 to 1921 they were estimated to be 117 people. In 1931, the number dropped to 50, a figure used for the 1961 Census too. In 1991 their head count was put at 23. Census 2001 counted 39 inhabitants.

Jallianwalla Bagh massacre

Why in News?

Government of India has decided to mark the remembrance of 100 years of the historical Jallianwalla Bagh Massacre next year.

Purpose and Plans:



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- As we prepare for remembrance of the “100 years of Jallianwala Bagh Massacre” in 2019, Jallianwala Bagh shall undergo necessary redevelopment and upgradation. Jallianwala Bagh shall continue to remind the young generation about the sacrifices made in freedom struggle.”
- The Government is planning to renovate the historical site by creating suitable infrastructure for providing basic amenities for the tourists, the Culture Minister said.
- A number of commemorative as well as constructive activities will be taken up during the remembrance period.
- The commemorative coin and postage stamps will be released on 13th April, 2019 (the day the incident took place 100 years ago). Ministry of Culture will organise cultural activities such as kavi sammelan, plays, exhibition, seminars, etc. across the country.

About Jallianwala Bagh Massacre:

- The **Jallianwala Bagh massacre**, also known as the **Amritsar massacre**, took place on 13 April 1919 when troops of the [British Indian Army](#) under the command of Colonel [Reginald Dyer](#) fired rifles into a crowd of Indians, who had gathered in [Jallianwala Bagh, Amritsar, Punjab](#).
- The civilians had assembled for a peaceful protest to condemn the arrest and deportation of two national leaders, Satya Pal and [Saifuddin Kitchlew](#).
- Raja Ram has argued however, that the Proclamation was ineffective, the crowd formed in deliberate defiance and the event signals a beginning of [Indian nationalism](#).

Martyrdom Day of Guru Teg Bahadur

The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind in his message on the eve of the martyrdom day of Guru Tegh Bahadur has said, “On the sacred occasion of the observation of the Martyrdom Day of Guru Teg Bahadur, I pay respectful homage to him.

Guru Teg Bahadur emphasised the values of freedom of worship, oneness, love and fraternity. Let us follow his commitment and values towards safeguarding the dignity of humanity and the welfare of all.”

About Guru Teg Bahadur:



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- **Guru Tegh Bahadur** (Punjabi pronunciation: [\[guru tey bəhadur\]](#); 1 April 1621 – 24 November 1675,) was the ninth of ten [Gurus](#) of the [Sikh religion](#).
- Tegh Bahadur continued in the spirit of the first guru, [Nanak](#); his 116 poetic hymns are registered in [Guru Granth Sahib](#).
- Guru Tegh Bahadur resisted the forced conversions of [Kashmiri Pandits](#) and non-Muslims to [Islam](#), and was publicly beheaded in 1675 on the orders of [Mughal emperor Aurangzeb](#) in [Delhi](#) for himself refusing to convert to Islam.
- [Gurudwara Sis Ganj Sahib](#) and [Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib](#) in Delhi mark the places of execution and cremation of the Guru's body.
- The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur is remembered as the Shaheedi Divas of Guru Tegh Bahadur every year on 24 November, according to the [Nanakshahi calendar](#) released by the [Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee](#) in 2003.

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UNESCO report on Education:

Important Observations:

- Literacy levels in rural households of India dip with seasonal [migration](#), the UNESCO global education monitoring report 2019 has observed, bringing out the educational challenges thrown up by migration.



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- In India, 10.7 million children aged 6 to 14 lived in rural households with a seasonal migrant in 2013.
- About 28% of youth aged 15 to 19 in these households were illiterate or had not completed primary school, compared to 18% of the cohort overall,” says the report.
- About 80% of seasonal migrant children in seven cities lacked access to education near work sites, and 40% are likely to end up in work rather than education, experiencing abuse and exploitation.

Construction sector

- The report says that the construction sector absorbs the majority of short-term migrants.
- Inter-State migration rates have doubled between 2001 and 2011.
- “An estimated 9 million migrated between States annually from 2011 to 2016,” the report says.
- It also warns of the negative impact on education for children who are left behind as their parents migrate: “Test scores were lower among left-behind children aged 5-8.”

Addressing the issue

- The report, however, acknowledges that India has taken steps to address the issue.
- “The [Right to Education](#) Act in 2009 made it mandatory for local authorities to admit migrant children. National-level guidelines were issued, allowing for flexible admission of children, providing transport and volunteers to support with mobile education, create seasonal hostels and aiming to improve coordination between sending and receiving districts and states,” it says.
- The report says some State governments have also taken steps for migrant children’s education.
- It, however, observes that most interventions are focused on keeping children in home communities instead of actively addressing the challenges faced by those who are already on the move.

Challenges:

- The report sees the growth of slums and informal settlements — where schools are often scarce — due to migration as a challenge.
- 18% of the students displaced by a riverfront project in Ahmedabad dropped out and an additional 11% had lower attendance,” it says, citing an example.



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- The report shows there is only one urban planner for every 1,00,000 people in India, while there are 38 for every 1, 00,000 in the United Kingdom

Swachh Bharat Mission

Why in News?

The Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen) will celebrate the World Toilet Day tomorrow with mass awareness and mobilization activities across States and districts.

Details of Programme:

- The focus is on usage of toilets, which is closely linked to the Prime Minister's call for a Swachh Bharat by October 2019.
- The central part of the day's celebrations is the the Swachh Bharat World Toilet Day Contest 2018 among all districts by organizing grassroots activities involving district, block and panchayat level teams, swachhagrahis and swachhata champions.
- The objective is to engage with communities and reaffirm the national resolve to a sustain the Sanitation achievement.
- States and districts are working on a competitive mode since 9th November with a range of innovative activities centred around Toilets and Swachhata creating unprecedented momentum in the country which is expected to culminate with mega initiatives tomorrow.

Success of SBM:

- Since the inception of the Swachh Bharat Mission, the rural sanitation coverage of India has increased significantly, from 39% in October 2014 to over 96% today.
- Over 8.8 crore household toilets have been built by rural Indians.
- As a result, 25 States/Union Territories, 530 districts, and over 5.2 lakh villages have declared themselves free from open defecation.
- The number of people practicing open defecation in rural India has gone down from 550 million in 2014, to less than 100 million today through the progress made under the Swachh Bharat Mission.

In recognition to the work done by the Swachh Bharat Mission (Grameen), the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation, is receiving a Lifetime Achievement Award at the World Toilet Summit in Mumbai tomorrow.

Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development

Context:



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Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) has won this year's Indira Gandhi Prize for Peace, Disarmament and Development, an award conferred by Indira Gandhi Trust each year on the late Prime Minister's birth anniversary.

The international jury for the awards was headed by former President Pranab Mukerjee.

About CSE:

- The CSE was established in 1980 under leadership of the late Anil Agarwal and is presently headed by Sunita Narain.
- It has over the years worked on various burning issues from air and water pollution, food safety, waste water management, climate change and so on.
- As the world and particularly India faces growing challenges that threaten the future of the planet, CSE has built up expertise and credibility to make a difference," the award citation read.

Official Language Conference

Why in News?

The Regional Conference under the aegis of the Department of Official Language, Ministry of Home Affairs, was organized by Regional Implementation Offices of North-1 and North-2 Regions in Chandigarh today.

About the Conference:

- The conference was convened under the chairmanship of the Joint Secretary, Department of Official Language, Dr. Bipin Behari.
- Department is developing new tools such as Kanthasth Mobile Version and Memory based translation tools.
- New initiatives is being taken by the Department of Official Language and the expectations from TOLICs.
- It was also emphasised that Hindi should be easy to use; we should not differentiate between literary and working Hindi and that the use of Hindi in field of technology is essential.
- There must be coordination between translators, teachers, journalists and writers, he added.

Importance of Hindi:

- Hindi is spoken by crores of people in the country.
- They think and express their ideas in Hindi.



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- Hindi is medium of expression of all the elements of Indian culture and society.
- Hindi is language of common people of the country.
- Hindi was not only the language of freedom struggle but is also language of social interactions.

Scheduled Castes Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989

Why in News?

The high rate of acquittals seen under the Scheduled Castes Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989 is not because the cases are false or malafide.

It is because of the failure of the police and the prosecution to render justice to a section of society which has suffered social stigma, poverty and humiliation for centuries, the Centre told the [Supreme Court](#).

Background:

- The government was explaining its decision to enact the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Amendment Act, 2018.
- The 2018 Act nullified a March 20 judgment of the Supreme Court, which allowed anticipatory bail to those booked for committing atrocities against Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes members.
- The original 1989 Act barred anticipatory bail.
- The apex court verdict saw a huge backlash across the country.
- Several persons died in protests and crores worth of property was destroyed.
- The government reacted by filing a review petition in the Supreme Court and subsequently amended the 1989 Act back into its original form.
- In August, several petitions were filed challenging the 2018 amendments.
- The lead petitioner, advocate Prithvi Raj Chauhan, even called the amendments a “blunder” and a violation of the fundamental right to equality and personal liberty.
- The Supreme Court, however, had refused to stay the implementation of the amendments.

No drop in cases

- In its affidavit responding to these petitions, the government has spelled out that there has been no decrease in the atrocities committed on members of SC/ST communities despite the laws meant to protect their civil rights.



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- It is untrue to say that the high rate of acquittal under Prevention of Atrocities (PoA) related cases is largely on account of false cases and misuse of provisions of the Act.
- It is rather attributed to several factors like delay in lodging the FIR, witnesses and complainants becoming hostile, absence of proper scrutiny of the cases by the prosecution before filing the charge sheet in court, lack of proper prosecution of the case, long pendency of the trial, lack of corroborative evidence, etc., etc.," the government affidavit said.
- The sad state of affairs continues despite the existence of 195 special courts across 14 States to exclusively try PoA cases.
- As per the National Crime Records Bureau, there is no decrease in the crimes against SC/ST members. The number of cases registered under the PoA in 2014 was 47,124, in 2015 it was 44,839 and in 2016, 47,338.

Increasing pendency

- Of the cases filed in 2014, 85.3% cases are pending.
- Of those where the trial was completed, 28.8% ended in convictions while in 71.2%, the accused were acquitted.
- The next year saw 87.3% pendency, 25.8% convictions, 74.2% acquittals while in 2016, with 89.3% pendency, there was 24.9% convictions and 75.1% acquittals.
- The SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act of 1989 is the least which the country owes to this section of the society who have been denied several civil rights since generations and have been subjected to indignities, humiliations and harassment," the government argued.

BASIC ministerial meet

The ministerial meet of BASIC (Brazil, South Africa, India and China) Countries, is being hosted by MoEFCC in New Delhi.

Areas of Discussion:

- Although BASIC group of countries are the leading emerging economies, still they have significant percentage of the world's poorest people.
- For them, enabling the growth of the poor out of poverty trap, is an important part of r response to tackling climate change and we the opportunities for the two efforts to complement each other are significant.

India's Role:



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- To that effect, the efforts outlined in India's NDCs - increasing clean energy production and access, deploying new energy efficient technologies, and adapting to low carbon-intensive lifestyles - are targeted at creating opportunities for sustainable livelihoods, and sustainable development for the poor.
- To further these objectives, It is to be ensured that the Paris Agreement Work Programme (PAWP) is prepared in accordance with the agreed principles of Equity and Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) as enshrined in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and its Paris Agreement.

About BASIC:

- The **BASIC countries** (also **Basic countries** or **BASIC**) are a bloc of four large [newly industrialized countries](#) - [Brazil](#), [South Africa](#), [India](#) and [China](#) - formed by an agreement on 28 November 2009.
- The four committed to act jointly at the [Copenhagen climate summit](#), including a possible united walk-out if their common minimum position was not met by the [developed nations](#).
- This emerging geopolitical alliance, initiated and led by China, then brokered the final [Copenhagen Accord](#) with the [United States](#).
- Subsequently, the grouping is working to define a common position on emission reductions and climate aid money, and to try to convince other countries to sign up to the [Copenhagen Accord](#).
- However, in January 2010, the grouping described the Accord as merely a political agreement and not legally binding, as is argued by the US and Europe.

Government of India and the World Bank sign \$310 million Loan Agreement

The Government of India, the Government of Jharkhand and the World Bank signed here today in New Delhi a \$310 million Loan Agreement for **Jharkhand Power System Improvement Project** to provide reliable, quality, and affordable 24x7 electricity to the citizens of Jharkhand.

About the Project:

- The **Jharkhand Power System Improvement Project** will help build new power transmission infrastructure.
- It will put in place systems to improve the technical efficiency and commercial performance of the state power sector utilities.
- The Project will help bring in modern technology solutions such as automated sub-stations, and network analysis and planning tools to provide reliable power supply and enhance customer satisfaction.



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- While a significant portion of the proposed investments are aimed at improving power transmission infrastructure, the Project will also focus on developing institutional capacities of State-owned power transmission and distribution companies and improving their operational performance.
- The Project is part of the Government of India's Power for All program launched in 2014.
- The plan envisages addition of over 4.5 GW generation capacities by 2022 (including a significant share of 1.5 GW from solar energy), through a mix of Private and Public-sector investments.

Background:

- Jharkhand was one of the first States' to join the Power for All plan and is making efforts to improve access to power through reforms in transmission and electricity distribution.
- With the demand for reliable power expected to almost double in the coming years, the Project will help meet the energy needs of the State for its economic growth.

Indo-Russia Relations:

Why in News?

[India](#) on Tuesday signed a \$500 mn deal with Russia to locally manufacture two stealth frigates with technology transfer.

Details of Agreement:

- The agreement was signed between Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) and Rosoboronexport of Russia.
- The \$500 mn deal is for material, design and specialists assistance from [Russia](#) for the two ships.
- Balance work will be done by GSL, and it will have a whole lot of Indian equipment including BrahMos missiles.
- The cost of the engines for the ships which would come directly from Ukraine and the cost of constructing them at GSL are in addition.
- While the ships are built by Russia, the engines are supplied by Zorya Nashproekt of Ukraine.
- Four gas turbine engines, gear boxes and specialist support will cost around \$50 mn per ship, the source stated.

Background:



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- In October 2016, India and Russia signed an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) for four Krivak or Talwar stealth frigates — two to be procured directly from Russia and two to be built by GSL.
- Of late, GSL has maintained a good track record.
- It has delivered 28 ships ahead of schedule in the last four years.
- India recently signed a \$1 bn deal with Russia for direct purchase of two frigates.
- India had earlier procured six frigates weighing 4000 tonnes of the same class in two different batches, the Talwar class and the upgraded Teg class.
- The four ships to be built will weigh 300 tonnes more than the earlier ones and will be armed with BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, Navy officials had said earlier.
- On Monday, Russia was declared the lowest bidder in the Army's Very Short Range Air Defence (VSHORAD) deal and last month India signed a \$5.43 bn deal for five S-400 long range air defence regiments.
- The series of deals with Russia come in the backdrop of looming US sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) law.

Cabinet approves setting up of Medical College at Silvassa in the UT of Dadra and Nagar Haveli

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the setting up of Medical College at Silvassa in the Union Territory (UT) of Dadra and Nagar Haveli.

Salient Features:

- Setting up of the medical college at Silvassa, UT Administration of Dadra and Nagar Haveli at a capital cost of Rs. 189 crore to be incurred in two years, 2018-19 – Rs. 114 crore and 2019-20 – Rs. 75 crore with yearly intake of 150 students.
- The project will be completed by 2019-20 and the construction and capital expenditure will be incurred as per the norms of Medical Council of India (MCI) norms and extant guidelines of the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- The annual recurring expenditure for the Medical College shall be managed within the budget provision for the UT.
- Creation of 21 regular posts of 14 (JS) level and above (including teaching and non-teaching) out of 357 regular posts which were recommended by the Committee on Establishment Expenditure (CEE).

Benefits:



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- The approval will increase the availability of doctors and address the issue of shortage of doctors..
- It will enhance medical education opportunities to students of the two UTs.
- It will also result in optimal utilization of the existing infrastructure of district hospitals and improve tertiary care facilities for the people of the two UTs and adjoining areas.
- The Medical College will benefit the students, especially those of tribal and rural areas of the two UTs, which will promote social equity.
- Health equity will be promoted by provision of better services through improvement in the strength of doctors in the UTs.

SHe-Box

Why in News?

The Ministry of Women and Child Development has linked SHe-Box, the online portal to report complaints of Sexual Harassment at Workplace, to all the Central Ministries, Departments and 653 districts across 33 States/Union Territories.

How does it work?

- For prompt disposal of complaints on SHe-Box, each case goes directly to the central/ state authority concerned having jurisdiction to take action in the matter.
- Cases on She-Box can be monitored by the complainants and Ministry WCD, reducing the time taken in case disposal.
- Till November 20, 2018, as many as 321 complaints have been registered with 'SHe-Box' out of which 120 are related to central ministries/departments, 58 are from state governments and 143 are from private companies.

Why was it set up?

- "SHe-Box portal is an effort to provide speedy remedy to women facing sexual harassment at workplace.
- With the linking of the portal to central and state governments, once a complaint is submitted to the portal, it will be directly sent to the section of the employer concerned.
- Through this portal, WCD as well as the complainant, can monitor the progress of the inquiry.
- This is a proactive step taken by the WCD Ministry in the wake of the worldwide campaign #MeToo, where women have related their experience of facing sexual harassment and abuse at workplace."

Background:



C.A From 17th November to 25th November 2018

- SHe-Box, was launched by WCD Minister Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi last year, offers the facility of making online complaints of sexual harassment at workplace to all women employees in the country including government and private employees.
- Those who have already filed a written complaint with the concerned Internal Complaint Committee (ICC) or Local Complaint Committee (LCC) constituted under the Sexual Harassment Act are also eligible to file their complaint through this portal.

Allied and Healthcare Professions Bill, 2018

Why in News?

The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the Allied and Healthcare Professions Bill, 2018 for regulation and standardisation of education and services by allied and healthcare professionals.

What does it aims?

The Bill provides for setting up of an Allied and Healthcare Council of India and corresponding State Allied and Healthcare Councils which will play the role of a standard-setter and facilitator for professions of Allied and Healthcare.

Details:

- Establishment of a Central and corresponding State Allied and Healthcare Councils; 15 major professional categories including 53 professions in Allied and Healthcare streams.
- The Bill provides for Structure, Constitution, Composition and Functions of the Central Council and State Councils, e.g. Framing policies and standards, Regulation of professional conduct, Creation and maintenance of live Registers, provisions for common entry and exit examinations, etc.
- The Central Council will comprise 47 members, of which 14 members shall be ex-officio representing diverse and related roles and functions and remaining 33 shall be non-ex-officio members who mainly represent the 15 professional categories.
- The State Councils are also envisioned to mirror the Central Council, comprising 7 ex-officio and 21 non-ex-officio members and Chairperson to be elected from amongst the non-ex-officio members.
- Professional Advisory Bodies under Central and State Councils will examine issues independently and provide recommendations relating to specific recognised categories.
- The Bill will also have an overriding effect on any other existing law for any of the covered professions.
- The State Council will undertake recognition of allied and healthcare institutions.



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Targets:

An Interim Council will be constituted within 6 months of passing of the Act holding charge for a period of two years until the establishment of the Central Council.

- The Council at the Centre and the States are to be established as body corporate with a provision to receive funds from various sources.
- Councils will also be supported by Central and State Governments respectively through Grant-in-aid as needed. However, if the State Government expresses inability, the Central Government may release some grant for initial years to the State Council.

Major Impact, including employment generation potential:

- Bring all existing allied and healthcare professionals on board during the first few years from the date of establishment of the Council.
- Opportunity to create qualified, highly skilled and competent jobs in healthcare by enabling professionalism of the allied and healthcare workforce.
- High quality, multi-disciplinary care in line with the vision of Ayushman Bharat, moving away from a 'doctor led' model to a 'care accessible and team based' model.
- Opportunity to cater to the global demand (shortage) of healthcare workforce which is projected to be about 15 million by the year 2030, as per the WHO Global Workforce, 2030 report.

Number of beneficiaries:

- It is estimated that the Allied and Healthcare Professions Bill, 2018 will directly benefit around 8-9 Lakh existing Allied and Healthcare related professionals in the country and several other graduating professionals joining workforce annually and contributing to the health system.
- However, since this Bill is directed to strengthen the healthcare delivery system at large, it may be said that the entire population of the country and the health sector as a whole will be benefited by this Bill.

Background:

- In the current state of healthcare system, there exist many allied and healthcare professionals, who remain unidentified, unregulated and underutilised.
- Our system is highly focused on efforts towards strengthening limited categories of professionals such as doctors, nurses and frontline workers (like Accredited Social Health Activist or ASHAs, Auxiliary Nurse Midwife or ANMs).
- However, numerous others have been identified over the years, whose potential can be utilised to improve and increase the access to quality driven services in the rural and hard to reach areas.



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- Allied and Healthcare Professionals (A&HPs) constitute an important element of the health human resource network, and the skilled and efficient Allied and Healthcare Professionals (A&HPs) can reduce the cost of care and dramatically improve the accessibility to quality driven healthcare services.
- Though such professionals have existed in the Indian healthcare system for many decades, a considerable gap in the allied and healthcare space is because of a lack of a comprehensive regulatory framework and absence of standards for education and training of A&HPs.
- The Bill thus seeks to establish a robust regulatory framework which will play the role of a standard-setter and regulator for Allied and Healthcare professions.

Indo-China Border Talk:

Why in News?

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held the 21st round of border talks in China's southwestern Sichuan province on Saturday, officials said.

Besides the border dispute, the two senior officials at the picturesque Dujiangyan city, would also review the progress made in bilateral ties since the Wuhan Summit between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Xi Jinping in April.

Details:

- Mr. Doval and Mr. Wang are the designated special representatives for border talks between India and [China](#). The talks were expected to be concluded later Saturday.
- Officials maintain that this round of talks may focus more on reviewing the progress on trade and maintenance of peace at borders than movement towards a solution to the border dispute as India is headed for general elections next year.
- Since the first-ever "informal summit" between Prime Minister Modi and President Xi in Wuhan, the two countries have launched a dialogue between trade officials to enhance India's exports to China to address the over \$51-billion trade deficit.
- Since then, progress has been made towards increasing India's export of rice, sugar and pharmaceuticals. This is expected to come under review at the talks, officials said.

Background:



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- Negotiations between the special representatives are regarded highly significant by both the countries as they cover all aspects of bilateral ties besides making efforts to resolve the vexed border dispute.
- The [India-China](#) border dispute covers 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control.
- China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of southern Tibet.
- The last round, held in New Delhi between Mr. Doval and Mr. Yang, took place in the backdrop of the 73-day standoff between the two militaries at Doklam over Chinese army's plan to build a road close to India's strategic "Chicken's Neck" corridor connecting the north-eastern states.
- The standoff ended after the People's Liberation Army halted the plans to build the road.
- Officials on both sides say a lot of spadework has been done to ensure peace and tranquillity at the border, though the solution to the border dispute is still elusive even after 20 rounds of talks.

Sanction Exemptions for South Korea:

What is it?

[South Korea](#) said on Saturday it had received sanctions exemptions from the U.N. Security Council for a joint survey of inter-Korean railways, the first step towards reconnecting rail and road links cut during the 1950-53 Korean War.

In April, the leaders of the two Koreas agreed to adopt practical steps to reconnect railways and roads as part of efforts to improve bilateral relationships.

Implications:

- The sanctions exemption has big implications given that the project has garnered recognition and support from the United States and the international society.
- It will help in quick construction of the railways, which will take inter-Korean cooperation to a new level.
- South Korea requested an exemption for deliveries of fuel and other equipment needed to conduct the [railway](#) survey in the North..
- Pyongyang is under wide-ranging U.N. sanctions for its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes.

Background:



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- In October, the two Koreas agreed to carry out joint field studies on transport plans, with a ground-breaking ceremony in late November and early December.
- But the plan was delayed amid stalled talks between Washington and Pyongyang following an unprecedented summit in June at which the two sides agreed to work toward nuclearisation and peace on the Korean peninsula.
- Negotiations have since made little headway, with Pyongyang upset by Washington's insistence that international sanctions must remain until it gives up its nuclear weapons.
- The United States has told its ally South Korea it should not improve ties with [North Korea](#) faster than Pyongyang takes steps to give up its nuclear weapons.



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General Studies-3

Industrial Park Rating System

Why in News?

The Union Minister for Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, Suresh Prabhu, released the report prepared by the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce & Industry, on Industrial Park Rating System.

Background:

- Manufacturing has emerged as one of the high growth sectors in India and it has moved 23 places up in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business (EODB-2019) and achieved rank 77 out of 190 countries.
- In order to ensure that India moves into the top 50 countries in Ease of Doing Business the Ministry has undertaken this exercise in studying infrastructure across states and in 3354 industrial clusters in order to assess quality of infrastructure in industrial parks.

Benefits:

- This will be a useful tool for policy makers and investors at the click of a button.
- 3000 parks are on the database and the industrial parks have been rated on 4 points:
 1. internal infrastructure,
 2. external infrastructure,
 3. business services and
 4. facilities and environment, safety management.

Other steps taken:

- To optimise resource utilisation and enhance the efficiency of the manufacturing sector, DIPP launched the Industrial Information System (IIS), a GIS-enabled database of industrial areas and clusters across the country in May 2017.



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- The portal serves as a one-stop solution to the free and easy accessibility of all industrial information including availability of raw material – agriculture, horticulture, minerals, natural resources, distance from key logistic nodes, layers of terrain and urban infrastructure.

Future Proposal:

- IPRS is proposed to be translated into an annual exercise covering all the parks across India.
- Coverage would be widened and updated to bring in deeper qualitative assessment feedback, bring in technological intervention and develop it as a tool that helps effectively for demand driven and need based interventions both by policy makers and investors.

AirSewa 2.0 web portal and mobile app

The Union Minister of Civil Aviation and Commerce & Industry, Suresh Prabhu, launched the upgraded version of AirSewa 2.0 web portal and mobile app in New Delhi today.

Features:

- Major improvements include features such as secure sign-up and log-in with social media, chatbot for travellers support, improved grievance management including social media grievances, real-time flight status and details flight schedule.
- The upgrade and improved version of AirSewa operates through an interactive web portal as well as through a mobile app for both android and iOS platforms and will offer passengers a convenient and hassle-free air travel experience.
- The web portal and application will help to capture air travellers' feedback for policy interventions.

Benefits to Passangers:

- Air passengers face issues like flight delays, problem in refunds, long queues, inadequate facilities at airports and complaints of lost baggage.
- The Ministry of Civil Aviation launched AirSewa web portal and mobile app in November 2016 to address this need.
- The AirSewa 1.0 was received well, with around 30,000 app downloads and around 75,000 web portal hits since its launch.
- It has helped significant number of air passengers to get their concerns resolved with 92 % closure rate for grievance solutions.



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- In addition to grievance redressal, AirSewa also provides real-time flight status and flight schedules.

Further upgrades of AirSewa are also being planned which would include DigiYatra registration, airport maps, BHIM payment integration and grievance escalation and transfer.

First observation of Indian Telescope:

The 0.7 m GROWTH-India telescope at the Indian Astronomical Observatory located in Hanle, Ladakh, has made its first science observation which is a follow-up study of a nova explosion.

What is Novae?

- Novae are explosive events involving violent eruptions on the surface of white dwarf stars, leading to temporary increase in brightness of the star.
- Unlike a supernova, the star does not go on to die but returns to its earlier state after the explosion.
- A report on this published in The Astronomer's Telegram notes the magnitude of the nova explosion first identified by Darnley et al as it varies, during November 8 to November 10.

About the telescope:

- The GROWTH-India telescope was commissioned six months ago soon after which it saw first light, on the night of June 12.
- The telescope has been taking readings since then, and this is the first 'follow-up' work. We are happy to see this first science observation.
- The celestial object was first noticed by a different group which saw the nova explosion.
- The telescope is potentially fully robotic and can operate on its own, but the way these readings were taken has only partly used its potential for automation. “
- This telescope has a field that is five to six times larger.
- It can 'slew' or move its focus from one part of the sky to another in just about 10-15 seconds and its camera can view stellar objects that are thousands to millions of light years away.

Threefold goals



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The GROWTH-India telescope is part of the Global Relay of Observatories Watching Transients Happen. Its goals are threefold:

- (1) Search for explosions in the optical regime whenever LIGO group detects a Binary Neutron Star merger
- (2) study nearby young supernova explosions.
- (3) Study nearby asteroids.

Transient phenomena such as supernovae are important parts of time-domain astronomy which is a less-explored frontier in astronomy.

World Trade Organization:

A conference on Strategic Alliance for WTO and Trade Remedies was held today.

India's Stand:

The Union Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, Suresh Prabhu, said that India will work along with other member countries to reform the World Trade Organization (WTO) to ensure that it remains an engine for global trade.

He said that the multilateral trading system is under stress and number of fresh trade restrictive measures have surged which will affect global trade and economic growth.

Importance of WTO:

- Without WTO, trade, economy will not expand as it is the only organization dealing with global rules of trade between nations.
- The WTO acts as an essential pillar of global trade governance providing the framework of rules and practices that underpin some 98% of global trade today.
- It is expected to provide rule based system as well as stability and predictability in world trade.

General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM)

The 26th meeting of the General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM) was held during November 13-16 2018 at Palais des Congrès, Versailles, France.



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What is it?

- CGPM is the highest international body of the world for accurate and precise measurements.
- The CGPM comprises 60 countries including India and 42 Associate Members.
- The International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM), the main executive body of CGPM has the responsibility of defining the International System of Units (SI).

Outcome of Meeting:

- The 26th CGPM meeting was very special and historic as the members have voted for the redefinition of 130 years old “Le grand K – the SI unit of kg” in terms of the fundamental Planck’s constant(h).
- The new definitions will come into force on 20 May 2019.
- The most important is the resolution on the revision of International System of Units.
- The definition of the seven base units namely, second, metre, kilogram, ampere, Kelvin, mole and candela has been changed from being linked to artefacts to being based on the fundamental constants on nature.
- Notably the definition of kilogram has been changed from being the mass of prototype sanctioned by the 1st CGPM held in Paris in 1889 and deposited at the BIPM to the Planck constant which is a physical constant.
- Likewise, the definition of metre has been changed to link it to the speed of light.
- There is a change in definition of time also.

Expected Benefits:

- The change in the definition will result in uniform and worldwide accessible SI system for international trade, high- technology manufacturing, human health and safety, protection of environment, global climate studies and the basic science under-pinning these.
- The units are expected to be stable in the long term, internally self-consistent and practically realisable being based on the present theoretical description of nature at the highest level.

What does it mean for common Man?

- After the kilogram’s definition is changed officially- on 20th May, 2019, also known as World Metrology Day- most people will never notice the difference.



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- It would not change baking ingredients on a kitchen scale, or even have an effect on the tons of goods shipped globally every day.
- For astronomers calculating the movements of stars and galaxies or for pharmacologists trying to define doses of medications down to the molecule, the new standard of measurement could change the way they work.
- But for many metrologists, that day to day work is not necessarily what inspired this change.
- The metric system was intended to be rational, universal set of units “for all people, for all time”.
- The SI unit will finally be truly universal system, free of any human artefacts.

Ease of Doing Business Grand Challenges

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, today launched the Ease of Doing Business Grand Challenge at an event in Lok Kalyan Marg in New Delhi.

Objectives:

The objective of this challenge is to invite innovative ideas based on Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Big Data Analytics, Blockchain and other cutting edge technology to reform Government processes.

The platform for the Grand Challenge is the Startup India Portal.

How will it help?

- The Prime Minister said that the aim is to make India a 5 trillion dollar economy in the shortest possible time.
- For this, improvement is necessary in every sector of the economy.
- Union Government is also working towards an industrial policy which will be more reflective of current realities, and will be in accordance with the new vision of the entrepreneurs of New India.
- The Prime Minister said that it is necessary to reduce human intervention in processes, and increase the use of modern and digital technologies.

New SEZ policy

Why in News?

The Baba Kalyani led committee constituted by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry to study the existing SEZ policy of India submitted its report to the Union Minister for Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation, Suresh Prabhu, in New Delhi today.



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About the Committee:

- The objectives of the committee were to evaluate the SEZ policy and make it WTO compatible.
- Suggest measures for maximizing utilisation of vacant land in SEZs, suggest changes in the SEZ policy based on international experience and merge the SEZ policy with other Government schemes like coastal economic zones, Delhi-Mumbai industrial corridor, national industrial manufacturing zones and food and textiles parks.

Need for new policy?:

- If India is going to become a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025 then the current environment of manufacturing competitiveness and services has to undergo a basic paradigm shift.
- The success seen by services sector like IT and ITES has to be promoted in other services sector like health care, financial services, legal, repair and design services.
- The Government of India has set a target of creating 100 million jobs and achieving 25% of GDP from the manufacturing sector by 2022, as part of its flagship 'Make in India' programme.
- Furthermore, the Government plans to increase manufacturing value to USD 1.2 trillion by 2025.
- While these are ambitious plans to propel India into a growth trajectory, it requires evaluation of existing policy frameworks to catalyse manufacturing sector growth.
- At the same time, policy needs to be compiled with the relevant WTO regulations.

In his interaction with the committee Suresh Prabhu said that the suggestions of the committee are very constructive and the Commerce Ministry will immediately begin formal consultations with the Finance Ministry and other Ministries so that implementation of the committee's recommendations may be done without any delay.

Diabetes Treatment Technology:

By using virus that infects bacteria (bacteriophages), researchers from Panjab University have successfully treated multidrug-resistant bacterial infection in diabetic mouse model.

- People with diabetes are more prone to fungal and bacterial infections and the emergence of multidrug-resistant organisms has worsened the situation.
- Researchers have been searching for alternative treatment approaches such as phytochemicals, metal ions, antibacterial nanoparticles, antibacterial enzymes.



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- The phage therapy has shown promising results among various alternative treatments studied.

About Phage therapy

- Phage therapy or use of a specific virus to target particular bacteria was in use in many countries before the popularisation of antibiotics.
- Even now it is used in Russia, Georgia, Poland and other countries.
- Though it is currently not used in India, it is an option we should choose as there is an increase in the number of drug-resistant pathogens in our country.

How it Works?

- In order to protect the phage and help in its slow release into the body, the researchers encapsulated the phage in a natural lipid casing called liposome.
- The liposome entrapped phage was injected into diabetic female mice to treat methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus-infected wound and the healing was studied for 20 days.
- The group treated with the liposome-entrapped phage showed a significant decrease in the wound size on day five itself and complete closure of wound was seen by day nine.
- The study showed liposome-loaded phage eradicated bacterial infection in 10 days whereas untreated mice showed high bacterial burden.
- Phage therapy can be used as a personalised therapy where the patient is first tested for bacterial infection and then treated with the appropriate phage.
- Also, it is very effective compared with antibiotics as it requires only a single dose, and its concentration does not decrease as long as it has the bacterial host," he adds.
- Phages are very safe and non-toxic.
- They are in our system, we encounter them each day in our food and water. Phages have no effect on humans as their host is bacteria, not us."

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Board Meeting:

What is it?

- The Board of Directors of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) meets every month to discuss inspection reports of banks and systemically important financial entities, and other routine issues of supervision.
- The Board now has 18 members, inclusive of the Governor and four Deputy Governors and two top bureaucrats from the Finance Ministry.



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- In addition, the government nominates 10 public representatives from different fields of activity to the board.

How did it come about?

- The Board meetings are normally boring affairs that go largely unnoticed. In fact, there has rarely, if ever, been a discussion on even the names nominated to the Board by the government.
- Yet, both have come into public focus in the last couple of months after the government decided to appoint Mr. Gurusurthy, known for his conservative views and swadeshi economics.
- Voices were immediately raised against his appointment, which was seen as imposing right-wing views on the [central bank](#), never mind the fact that it is impossible for one or two nominees to swing an 18-member Board their way.
- The appointment has to be seen in the backdrop of tensions in the relations between the central bank and the Finance Ministry.

Issues of Disagreement:

There are several issues on which the government and the RBI disagree.

- A circular of the central bank that dragged several power companies defaulting on repayments to the insolvency process, classification of some weak banks as those needing immediate corrective action (which prevented them from lending freely) and the RBI's reluctance to open the liquidity tap for non-banking finance companies (NBFCs) have been sore points with the government.
- In addition, the government has been coveting the RBI's reserves, which it feels belongs to the government.
- The RBI has been transferring its entire annual profits to the government as dividend in the last five years, but it is reluctant to touch the stock of reserves on its balance sheet.

Why does it matter?

- The upcoming meeting is crucial in the backdrop of the fraught relationship between the government and the RBI as it can result either in resolution or lead to a point of no return.
- The choices are clear: the RBI and the government have to arrive at an understanding on the issues listed above through a spirit of give and take.



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- Alternatively, in the event of the two not being able to agree, and if the government still wants to have its way, it can, if it so chooses, exercise extraordinary powers vested under Section 7 of the Reserve Bank of India Act to give directions to the RBI to act as per its instructions.

What lies ahead?

- The signals coming from the two sides are mixed.
- RBI Governor Urjit Patel is reported to have met Prime Minister Narendra Modi last week in an obvious effort to explain his position and resolve the issues to mutual satisfaction.
- But government officials have been maintaining pressure through media briefings on the RBI to make it bend.
- In the worst case scenario, the government resorting to Section 7 will make Mr. Patel's position untenable and he will have no option but to resign.

Nasa's Mars Mission:

Why in News?

NASA has picked an ancient river delta as the landing site for its uncrewed Mars 2020 rover, to hunt for evidence of past life on the earth's neighbouring planet.

About the Site:

- Even though the Red Planet is now cold and dry, the landing site, Jezero Crater, was filled with a 500-meter deep lake that opened to a network of rivers some 3.5 to 3.9 billion years ago.
- The delta is a good place for evidence of life to be deposited and then preserved for the billions of years that have elapsed since this lake was present.
- Experts believe the 45-km wide basin could have collected and preserved ancient organic molecules and other signs of microbial life.
- At least five different kinds of rocks, including "clays and carbonates that have high potential to preserve signatures of past life," are believed to lie in the crater, just north of the Martian equator, the US space agency said in a statement.
- Carbonate rock is produced by the interaction of water, atmospheric gases and rock, and leaves clues about habitable environments, said Farley.

About the Mission:



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- Scientists have debated where to land the rover for the past four years, and whittled down their decision from more than 60 possible sites.
- The \$2.5 billion rover is planned to launch in July 2020, and land in February 2021.
- Mars 2020 is designed to land inside the crater and collect samples that will eventually be returned to Earth for further analysis, perhaps by the later 2020s.

Perilous landing

- But first, the rover has to make it to the surface intact and upright, dodging a field of boulders, sand traps and the edges of the delta.
- Mars 2020 will use the same sky crane landing that successfully delivered NASA's unmanned Curiosity rover to a location called Gale Crater on Mars back in 2012.
- Gale Crater, with its many layers of sediment, was chosen to tell the story of how Mars transitioned from a warm, wet planet to the frigid and dusty one it is today.

Silica remnants detected in distant supernovae

The next time you're gazing out of the window in search of inspiration, keep in mind the material you're looking through was forged inside the heart of an exploding ancient star.

An international team of scientists said on Friday that they had detected silica — the main component of glass — in the remnants of two distant supernovae billions of light years from earth.

Researchers used NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope to analyse the light emitted by the collapsing mega-cluster and obtain silica's "fingerprint" based on the specific wavelength of light the material is known to emit.

A supernova occurs when a large star burns through its own fuel, causing a catastrophic collapse ending in an explosion of galactic proportions. It is in these celestial maelstroms that individual atoms fuse together to form many common elements, including sulphur and calcium.

Silica makes up around 60% of the earth's crust and one particular form, quartz, is a major ingredient of sand.

As well as glass windows and fibreglass, silica is also an important part of the recipe for industrial concrete.



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“We’ve shown for the first time that the silica produced by the supernovae was significant enough to contribute to the dust throughout the Universe, including the dust that ultimately came together to form our home planet,” said Haley Gomez, from Cardiff University.

“Every time we gaze through a window, walk down the pavement or set foot on a sandy beach, we are interacting with material made by exploding stars that burned millions of years ago.”

In 2016, scientists reported they had found traces of lithium — a metal used in the manufacture of many modern-day electronics — at the heart of exploding nova, a phenomenon that occurs when a white dwarf star absorbs hydrogen from a nearby sun.

MoU between Atal Innovation Mission, India and Fund "Talent and Success", Russia

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has been apprised of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Atal Innovation Mission, India and Fund "Talent and Success", Russia for promotion of science & technology, strong foundation to the collaborative work through exchange of students, teachers, researchers and scientists between both countries.

Benefits:

The MoU will facilitate promotion of science & technology, strong foundation to the collaborative work through exchange of students, teachers, researchers and scientists between India and Russia.

Major Impact:

- The MOU will provide a mechanism in taking part in establishing relationships with-schools, universities, cultural institutions, science & technology and specialized education institutions, high-tech companies, startups and innovation centers in both countries.
- The activities are expected to promote creation of new scientific knowledge, generation of intellectual property, innovations and products development in both countries.

Background:

- The students will worked on innovative concepts for exploring development of new prototypes in five sectors; healthcare, space technology, clean technology, agri-technology and smart mobility.



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- The prototypes developed were exhibited by the young student innovators before Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi and President of Russian Federation, Mr. Vladimir Putin and on 5th October, 2018.
- Through this MoU, it is proposed to continue the collaborative work between Atal Innovation Mission (AIM), India and Fund "Talent and Success", Russia.

Asia Environment Enforcement Awards, 2018

Why in News?

United Nation Environment has awarded Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB), Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India with Asia Environment Enforcement Awards, 2018 for excellent work done by the Bureau in combating transboundary environmental crime.

About the award:

- Asia Environmental Enforcement Award, recognizes the excellent work done by Government officials and teams from the bureau who are diligently involved in combating trans boundary environmental crime.
- The Asia Environment Enforcement Awards publicly recognize and celebrate excellence in enforcement by government officials and institutions/teams combating transboundary environmental crime in Asia.
- The awards are given to outstanding individuals and/or government organizations/teams that demonstrate excellence and leadership in enforcement of national laws to combat transboundary environmental crime in one of the following eligibility criteria areas: collaboration; impact; innovation; integrity and gender leadership.

Why award to WCCB?

- WCCB has been conferred this award in Innovation category.
- WCCB has adopted innovative enforcement techniques that have dramatically increased enforcement of transboundary environmental crimes in India.
- Notably it has developed an online Wildlife Crime Database Management System to get real time data in order to help analyze trends in crime and devise effective measures to prevent and detect wildlife crimes across India.
- This system has been successfully used to analyse trends, helping put in preventive measures as well as for successfully carrying out operations such as Operation SAVE KURMA, THUNDERBIRD, WILDNET, LESKNOW, BIRBIL, THUNDERSTORM, LESKNOW-II.



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- In order to involve the public in the fight against wildlife crime, WCCB has also developed a scheme to enroll willing persons as WCCB Volunteers.

The award was decided upon by a selection panel set up by the UN Environment and this is the second time in a row the awards are being given by UN Environment to India.

Capital Infusion Plan:

Why in News?

The Finance Ministry would not curtail its capital infusion plan for this financial year even as state-owned banks would be needing lesser funds following the Reserve Bank's decision to defer the deadline to meet Basel III norms by a year, according to sources.

Details:

- Under the new dispensation, the capital infusion by the government in public sector banks (PSBs) for meeting the capital buffer norms would come down to around ₹15,000-20,000 crore, sources said.
- However, there will not be any reduction in the capital funding plan as announced in October last year despite a lower requirement due to the RBI extending the deadline for meeting the CCB of 2.5%, under Basel-III norms, until March 2020, sources said.
- The extension could reduce the burden of PSBs by ₹35,000 crore this fiscal, according to rating agency Crisil.
- After assessing the requirement of each bank, the ministry is expected to finalise capital infusion of about ₹54,000 crore by this month-end or by the first half of the next month.

Growth capital

- The infusion would help improve banks' financial health.
- Some banks would get necessary regulatory capital while others would get it for fuelling growth.
- The CCB is currently at 1.875% and the remaining 0.625% was to be met by March 2019.
- Generally, there is a leverage of 10 times on the capital and lending capacity would increase by ₹3.5 lakh crore.

Indo-China Agriculture Trade:



C.A From 17th November to 25th November 2018

Opportunities:

- As the trade war with the United States continues to bite — with only a slim chance that the world’s two biggest economies can go past a possible truce — China appears to be opening up to non-U.S. imports.
- Smelling an unexpected opportunity to export more to the Middle Kingdom, India is quietly squeezing in the door.
- The focus so far has been on pushing agri-products into the Chinese market.
- Sensing that China would look first at its food security by diversifying imports in view of the trade war, New Delhi has stepped up its agro-diplomacy with Beijing.
- Over the past two months, Indian food and beverage producers have been conducting seminars and road shows in the Chinese capital.

Progress Made

- Though Indian soya bean exports are apparently a priority, especially after the China imposed a 25% levy on U.S. imports, success in the huge Chinese soya bean market is yet to materialise, though some progress may have registered during talks.
- However, other agri-products may have stolen a march over soya beans in finding a niche in the Chinese market.
- China has been traditionally a green tea market. But of late, its young people are developing a taste for milk infused bubble tea, potentially opening a larger market for Indian black teas
- India’s efforts to export sugar to China, which began in earnest in June, also appear to have paid dividends.
- China has also opened up imports of non-Basmati rice from India in June on the sidelines of the Qingdao summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).
- Officials say China is a lucrative \$1.5-\$2 billion market for Indian rice.
- A delegation of Indian rice traders was in Beijing in October on a follow-up visit after China, in principle, opened its doors to 24 India-based rice mills.

Trade imbalance

- Despite signs of incremental progress, India’s \$63-billion trade imbalance with China is alarming.
- Pharmaceuticals, information technology services and tourism, in which India has a significant global footprint, had a “minuscule presence” in China.
- Earlier this year, India had raised the red flag about its adverse trade balance during China’s trade policy review at the WTO, specifically citing hindrances that Indian



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exporters of rice, meat, pharmaceuticals and IT products were encountering to access the Chinese market.

Milk Adulteration Sensor:

Why in News?

A smart phone-based sensors are being developed by the researchers at IIT-H to detect adulteration in milk.

How does it work?

As a first step, they have developed a detector system to measure the acidity in milk through an indicator paper that changes colour according to the acidity in the milk.

They have also developed algorithms that can be incorporated into a mobile phone to accurately detect the colour change.

Benefits:

- “While techniques such as chromatography and spectroscopy can be used to detect adulteration, they generally require expensive set-up and are not amenable to miniaturisation into low-cost easy-to-use devices.
- Given this, they do not appeal to the vast majority of milk consumers in the developing world.
- We need to develop simple devices that the consumer can use to detect milk contamination.
- It should be possible to make milk adulteration detection fail-safe by monitoring all of these parameters at the same time, without the need for expensive equipment.”
- On testing with milk spiked with various combinations of contaminants, they found near-perfect classification with accuracy of 99.71%.

Chandrayaan 2

Why in News?

The Chandrayaan-2 lunar lander’s sensors are set to undergo a crucial test in the next few days as the mission races towards a planned take-off in around two months.

Details:



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- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) plans to fly the sensors on an aircraft over its artificial lunar site at Challakere to see how they will function and guide the Chandrayaan-2 landing craft when it starts descending on the lunar terrain.
- The test flight is slated tentatively for November 24.
- The orbiter carrying the lander and a rover is scheduled to be sent to the Moon from Sriharikota on January 31 and expected to reach there sometime in February 2019.
- The test on ground, called the Lander Sensor Performance Test or LSPT, will be conducted at ISRO's new R&D campus in Chitradurga district, about 200 km from here, ISRO Chairman K. Sivan said.

Need for test?

- The highly autonomous or pre-programmed mission uses a large number of sensors.
- Among them are those that help the lander to precisely assess its height from the landing spot; decide its speed and help it to steer clear of any boulders or uneven surface.
- The lander is being developed and tested by the U.R. Rao Satellite Centre in Bengaluru.
- For the test, a prototype module carrying the sensors will be flown on one of ISRO's two small aircraft.
- As the plane descends from around 7 km to about 1 km over the artificial terrain, the sensors must show how they will guide the soft landing of the lunar craft at the right spot, speed and position.

Surface simulated

- About two years back, ISRO had started readying a part of the Challakere site to resemble lunar craters and had conducted a few preliminary sensor tests.
- Features of the lander have since been modified and the upcoming tests will also validate the new design.
- The development and testing of the orbiter are over.
- Lander-related activities are going on.