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## I. POLITY & GOVERNANCE

**TOPIC: GS II, SILENT  
FEATURES OF RPA 1951**

### 1. Representation of the People Act, 1951

**Source: PIB**

**Why in news:**

Umesh Sinha Committee to review and suggest modifications and changes in the provisions of the Section 126 of Representation of the People Act 1951 and tackling difficulties in regulating media platforms during the prohibitory 48 hours in a multi-phase election has recently submitted its report to the Election Commission.

**The Committee had the following scope of work:**

- To study and examine the present provisions of the section 126 and other related sections of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and identify difficulties/critical gaps to regulate the violation of the said provisions of the act, particularly during the prohibitory period of 48 hours before the completion of the poll, mentioned in section 126 and suggest necessary amendment/modification.
- To examine the type, category or growth of communication technology or media platform in the country and difficulties in regulating these media platforms during multiphase election when prohibitory period of 48 hours are in force.
- To assess the impact of new media platforms and social media during the prohibitory period of 48 hours before the close of poll and its implication in view of the provisions of section 126.
- To examine the present provisions of Model Code of Conduct (MCC) related to the above issues and suggest modification in this regard.

**About Section 126 of the Representation of the People Act 1951 and model code of conduct:**

- Section 126 of RP Act, 1951 prohibits displaying any election matter by means of television or similar apparatus, during the period of 48 hours before the hour fixed for conclusion of poll in a constituency.
- It was first introduced in the assembly elections of Kerala in 1960 and in Lok Sabha elections in 1962.
- Initially it was merely a set of guidelines however ECI started implementing it seriously since 1991.
- Code of Conduct comes into force immediately after the elections are announced by the EC and it applies to political parties, their candidates and

polling agents, the government in power and all government employees.

- It prevents the ruling party from using official machinery for electioneering work. Public places for holding election rallies and helipads for flight in connection with elections are to be made available to all parties on the same terms and conditions on which they are used by the party in power.
- Government authorities cannot announce any financial grants to the people or inaugurate any projects.
- Political parties are allowed to criticize opponents for their failure to do work or fulfil promises made to the electorate, but are not allowed to criticize on the basis of any aspect of private life not connected with the public activities.
- Strictly prohibits parties and candidates from making any appeals to caste or communal feelings for securing votes.
- EC has the power to disqualify a candidate if he/she violates the code.

**Why the need arise?**

- The task of maintaining campaign silence during last 48 hours before the conclusion of polling is becoming increasingly onerous in the light of the increasing influence of digital media.
- Model code of conduct does not have any legal backing although the Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice recommended the MCC be part of the Representation of People Act 1951 in 2013.
- By the time any proof for violation of MCC is produced against the accused the election ends and relevance of the case ends. This makes the political parties not to take the case seriously.
- Due to this the rate of acquittal is high along with high pendency of the respective cases for violation.

**E-Vigil:**

- The EC has recently introduced the C-vigil app empowering the citizens to report political misconduct through the app, with proof, in the form of a video or photograph that are geo-tagged.
- Once a user uploads and sends a picture or video of a possible political malpractice on the C-Vigil app, the information will be sent to the district control room, which will, in turn, alert the field units, such as the flying squads of the local police, static surveillance teams and reserve teams, which can reach the spot in a few minutes.
- It will enable the law enforcement agencies to get the proof for violation and the high level of

acquittals in the wake of lack of evidence can be brought down.

**TOPIC: GS II, GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INTERVENTION**

**2. Reservation of general category candidates**

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

- The Constitution (124th Amendment) Bill 2019 providing 10 per cent reservation in jobs and educational institutions to the economically weaker sections in the unreserved category has been recently passed by the Parliament.
- It will also include the unreserved candidates from other religion also and the quota will be over and above the existing 50% reservation to the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and the Other Backward Classes (OBC).
- The constitution amendment is required because the constitution provides only for reservation based on social and educational backwardness in article 15 and 16.

- It laid down a 50 per cent limit on reservations and observed that economic, social and educational criteria were needed to define backward classes.
- It categorically held that a backward class cannot be determined only and exclusively with reference to economic criterion. It may be a consideration or basis along with, and in addition to, social backwardness, but it can never be the sole criterion.
- Reservation for backward classes (which include OBCs and SCs & STs) should be confined to initial appointments and not extend to promotions.
- To circumvent the Supreme Court judgment, parliament enacted 77th, 81st, 82nd, and 85th amendment acts, and inserted the provisions for reservation in promotions whose validity was upheld the Supreme Court in the Nagraj case.

**What is the government stand?**

- The government invoked the Directive Principles of State policy contained in Article 46 to defend its proposal for reservation for the economically weaker sections.
- This could be questionable. Article 46 says “the State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.”

**Is there any need for state’s approval in the amendment?**

- The bill seeks to amend the fundamental rights namely article 15 and 16 and according to article 368 of the Constitution, if amendment of a fundamental right is in question, the bill concerned need not be sent to the states’ legislative assemblies for ratification. Only Constitution amendments which affect the Centre-State relations or division of powers in a federal structure require subsequent ratification by the States’ Legislatures before the Presidential assent.

**Reserved category**  
A look at the details of the 10% quota and its ramifications

**ELIGIBILITY**

- People earning less than ₹8 lakh annually
- People who own farm land below 5 acres
- People who own a house measuring less than 1,000 sq ft

**BACKGROUND**

- In its famous Indra Sawhney judgment, the Supreme Court had set a cap of 50% on quotas
- Hence, a Constitution Amendment Bill would be required as the Constitution does not provide for reservation on the basis of economic criteria

**PARLIAMENTARY PROCEDURE**

- **NEED FOR AN AMENDMENT:** The proposed quota for the poor among the upper castes will be over and above the existing 50% reservation. The government is likely to amend Article 15(4), 16(4)
- **ARTICLE 368:** The Bill must be passed in each House by an absolute majority (over 50% of the total membership) and a two-thirds majority of members present and voting

**Reservation and Indra Sawhney case of 1992:**

- Indra Sawhney case, also known as Mandal case, became the corner stone in the present reservation structure of the country.
- It recognized socially and economically backward classes as a category and recognized the validity of the 27 per cent reservation.
- The concept of ‘creamy layer’ gained currency through this judgment. Those among the OBCs who had transcended their social backwardness to be excluded from the reservation.

**Possibility of the Judicial Review:**

- According to the experts, the economic reservation law is open for judicial review as it affects the basic structure of the Constitution because the constitution does not provide for economic reservation.
- The Indira Sawhney judgment has capped the reservation limit to 50%. Now, the new Bill increases reservation to 60%. The court has said economically-deprived is not a homogenous

group. It has held that economic backwardness cannot be the sole criterion for reservation.

**Areas of concerns:**

- It will result in 59% quota which would leave open category candidates with just 41% government jobs or seats. This may amount to sacrifice of merit and violate Article 14 which. Thus, it also goes against the doctrine of basic feature of the constitution.
- If the Supreme Court agrees to lift the 50% cap, all states of India can extend the quantum of reservation and unreserved candidates will stand to lose in State services and merit will be the casualty.
- If the Supreme Court rejects the idea of breaching the 50% cap, Economically Weaker Section (EWS) quotas can be provided only by eating into the SC, ST and OBC quota pie, which will have social and political implications.
- There have been issues where the quotas were increased by State governments exceeding the 50% limit thereby offending the equality norm. In Nagaraj (2006), a Constitution Bench ruled that equality is part of the basic structure of the Constitution. It said the 50% ceiling, among other things, was a constitutional requirement without which the structure of equality of opportunity would collapse. There has been a string of judgments against reservations that breach the 50% limit.
- Another question is whether reservations can go to a section that is already adequately represented in public employment. It is not clear if the government has quantifiable data to show that people from lower income groups are under-represented in its service.
- Reservations have been traditionally provided to undo historical injustice and social exclusion suffered over a period of time, and not to eliminate poverty.
- It is noteworthy that if the EWS is treated as a category just like the SC, ST and OBC, a large chunk of general category candidates will apply for just 10% seats and the cut-offs can rise.
- As the creamy layer (8 lakhs annually) provision applies here, National Sample Survey (NSS) of 2011-12 shows that the annual per capita expenditure for 99% of households falls under this threshold. Thus, almost everyone will fall under this category.

**Way forward:**

- One strategy may be to try and spread the benefits of reservations as widely as possible within the existing framework and ensure that individuals use their reserved category status only

once in their lifetime. This would require that anyone using reservations to obtain a benefit such as college admission must register his/her Aadhaar number and she would be ineligible to use reservations for another benefit (e.g. a job) in the future. This would require no changes to the basic framework but spread the benefits more broadly within the reserved category allowing a larger number of families to seek upward mobility.

- A second strategy might be to recognise that future economic growth in India is going to come from the private sector and entrepreneurship. In order to ensure that all Indians, regardless of caste, class and religion, are able to partake in economic growth, we must focus on basic skills.
- Further, experts suggest that we have focused on admission to prestigious colleges and government jobs, but little attention is directed to social inequality in the quality of elementary schooling.

**TOPIC: GS II, ASPECTS OF GOVERNANCE**

**3. DNA Technology Bill**

**Source: The Hindu**

**Why in news:**

The Lok Sabha has recently passed a bill that allows regulated use of DNA technology to establish the identity of certain defined categories of persons, including offenders, suspects, undertrials and also for civil matters such as parentage disputes, emigration or immigration, and transplantation of human organs.

**Details of the bill:**

- It establishes a National DNA Data Bank and Regional DNA Data Banks for maintaining index related to crime scene suspects or undertrials, offenders, missing persons and unknown deceased persons.
- It establishes a DNA Regulatory Board for supervision and providing accreditation to the above DNA data banks.
- It provides the provision for written consent by individuals to collect DNA samples from them. Consent is not required for offences with punishment of more than seven years of imprisonment or death.
- It provides for the removal of DNA profiles on the basis of written request by the individual and in the case of undertrials, removal will take place on the basis of a court order.
- It provides punishment which is up to three years and fine of up to one lakh rupees for
  1. unauthorized disclosure of information from the Data Bank

2. Obtaining or using DNA samples or information from the Data Bank without authorization
- Penalty for intentional tampering or destruction of biological evidence is imprisonment up to five years as well as fine of up to two lakh rupees.

**What are the issues associated with the bill?**

- The bill is silent does not stop the use of data for diagnostic purpose.
- Bill requires consent of an individual when DNA profiling is used in only criminal investigations or identifying missing persons and not on civil matters which can lead to violation of privacy.
- It is noteworthy that the bill does not specify any indices in the DNA data banks for the storage of DNA profiles for civil matters and also there is no provision for removal of DNA profiles for civil matters from the data banks. As the bill requires the DNA laboratories to share DNA data prepared by them with the National and Regional DNA Data Banks. It is unclear whether DNA profiles related to civil matters tested by DNA laboratories will also be included in the DNA Data Banks.
- If DNA profiles related to civil matters were to be stored in the DNA Data Banks, there may be a violation of the right to privacy.
- A DNA sample can provide additional information about an individual other than his identity. The Bill does not specify that information other than identity will not be included in a DNA profile.
- DNA profiles are first prepared by laboratories and are then shared with the DNA Data Banks. It only requires the DNA data banks to remove the profile and not require DNA laboratories to remove DNA profiles.
- The bill does not provide any mechanism for redressal of grievances in cases where the DNA profile is not removed from the data banks.
- According to the bill, the DNA sample also includes photographs or video recording of body parts as a source for sample collection in addition to the biological parts of the body. It is unclear how a DNA sample can be collected from a photograph or video recording.

**What is the need?**

- Forensic DNA profiling is of proven value in solving cases involving offences that are categorized as affecting the human body and those against property including theft, burglary and dacoity.
- The aggregate incidence of such crimes in the country, as per the statistics of the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for 2016, is in excess of 3 lakhs per year of which only a very small

proportion is being subjected to DNA testing at present. It is expected that the expanded use of this technology in these categories of cases would result not only in speedier justice delivery but also in increased conviction rates, which at present is only around 30% (NCRB Statistics for 2016).

**II. SOCIAL JUSTICE**

**TOPIC: SOCIETY**

**4. Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children Scheme**

**Source: PIB**

**Why in news:**

Government has recently elaborated on action taken for implementation of Cyber Crime Prevention against Women and Children (CCPWC) Scheme.

**Details of the scheme:**

- The scheme was launched in September 2018 by the home ministry to check objectionable online content.
- The portal will allow citizens to lodge complaints on objectionable online content related to child pornography, child sexual abuse material and sexually explicit material such as rape and gang rape.
- The main objective of the scheme is to have an effective mechanism to handle cybercrimes against women and children in the country.
- Features:
  1. Online cybercrime reporting platform
  2. National level cyber forensic laboratory
  3. Cybercrime awareness activities
  4. Research & Development

**TOPIC: GS I, SOCIAL JUSTICE**

**5. The menace of Social Boycott**

**Source: The Hindu**

**Why in news:**

Some people have been recently arrested for alleged social boycott of members of a Scheduled Caste community over the construction of an Ambedkar Sangam building in Nizamabad district of Telangana.

**About social Boycott:**

- A social boycott is an act of voluntary and intentional abstention from dealing with a person, organization, as an expression of protest, usually for social, political reasons.
- It is frequent in India where an individual or a group are boycotted by other set of majority in the name of caste, religion, rituals, and traditions.

**Other laws dealing with social boycott:**

- Maharashtra’s law against Social Boycott.
- The Maharashtra Prohibition of People from Social Boycott (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2016 is the first law that treats social boycott as a serious crime.
- It disallows social boycott in the name of caste, community, religion, rituals or customs.

**Way forward for dealing with social boycott:**

- A social movement to spread awareness needs to be taken up.
- The attitude of the people needs to be addressed which can be done through regular awareness weeks in schools, colleges, specialised training workshops and so on.
- The administration should make a concerted effort to popularise the achievements of people who broke this barrier and were successful in their lives.
- Experts opine legal mechanisms are only a part of the solution. The masses need to be educated through workshops, celebrating Anti-boycott weeks etc.
- The sensitivity training needs to be imparted to the administration at all levels.
- The registration of cases needs to be tracked using technology like Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS) projects so that police do not use their discretion to avoid registering cases.
- Various stakeholders like NGO’s Media groups, public policy advocacy groups need to be engaged meaningfully to ensure effective implementation of the act.
- To address the various layers of exclusion as mentioned above, a comprehensive anti-discrimination law is required, on the lines of the civil rights enactments in the United States and the United Kingdom.

**III. ECONOMY**

**TOPIC: GS III, INDIAN ECONOMY AND ISSUES RELATING TO PLANNING, GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT**

**6. RBI allows Tokenization of Card Transactions**

**Source: The Hindu**

**What's the news?**

The Reserve Bank of India has allowed tokenization of debit, credit and prepaid card transactions to enhance

the safety of the digital payments ecosystem in the country.

- The bank has offered permission for the process using all types of payment services and methods, including Near-Field Communication (NFC), Magnetic Secure Transmission (MST), in-app payment methods and cloud services.
- However, the facility shall be offered only through mobile phones and tablets initially. Extension to other devices will be examined later based on the experience.

**What is Tokenization?**

- Tokenisation involves a process in which a unique token, issued by the bank, masks sensitive card details. Thereafter, in lieu of actual card details, this token is used to perform card transactions in contactless mode at Point of Sale (POS) terminals, Quick Response (QR) code payments, etc.

**Significance:**

- The permission to tokenise cards is a huge step towards enhancing security of debit and credit cards, which have been exposed to serious online cyber crimes.

**TOPIC: GS III, INFRASTRUCTURE: ENERGY, PORTS, ROADS, AIRPORTS, RAILWAYS, ETC**

**7. Transport Subsidy Scheme**

**Source: PIB**

**What's the news?**

In order to facilitate the process of industrialization in hilly, remote and inaccessible areas, transport incentive is provided to the states of:

- North Eastern Region (including Sikkim) under North Eastern Industrial Development Scheme (NEIDS) - 2017.
- Jammu & Kashmir under Industrial Development Scheme - 2017.
- Lakshadweep and A&N Islands under Lakshadweep and Andaman & Nicobar Island Development Scheme - 2018.

Under these schemes, all eligible industrial units can avail incentive on transportation of only finished goods through Railways or the Railway Public Sector Undertakings, Inland Waterways or scheduled airline (shipping for Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands also) for five years from the date of commencement of commercial production/operation.

**Freight Subsidy Scheme (FSS):**

- The FSS (2013) replaced the Transport Subsidy Scheme, 1971.

- It was in operation in all 8 North Eastern States, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, J&K, Darjeeling District of West Bengal, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep islands.
- The FSS has been discontinued since 22.11.2016. But, the industrial units under these schemes during their currency are eligible for the benefits of the scheme.

**Note: While the inland transport incentive is available for certain landlocked states, there is no proposal to provide the same to the state of Chhattisgarh.**

#### **About Transport Subsidy Scheme:**

Government of India had introduced Transport Subsidy Scheme (TSS) on 23.7.1971 to develop industrialization in the remote, hilly and inaccessible areas.

- The objective is to develop industrialization in the remote, hilly and inaccessible areas in 8 North Eastern Region.
- DIPP (Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion) is the implementing agency of TSS/FSS.
- In order to check any misuse, Directorates of Industries in each beneficiary State/UT are required to:
  1. Carry out periodical checks to ensure that the raw materials/finished goods for which transport subsidy is given in actually used for the intended purpose,
  2. To draw up procedures and arrangements for scrutinizing the claims and for promote payment of the claims,
  3. To lay down a system of pre-registration and to fix and indicate the capacity of the units during registration,
  4. To lay down procedure to ensure regular inflow of information regarding the movement of raw material and finished goods,
  5. To lay down that statistics of production and utilization or raw material should be maintained and kept open for inspection.

**TOPIC: GS III, INDIAN ECONOMY, GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT**

### **8. RBI forms Nandan Nilekani-led Digital Payments Panel**

**Source: The Hindu**

#### **Why in news:**

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has set up a five-member committee headed by Infosys chairman Nandan Nilekani (former chairman UIDAI )to suggest a

strategy for deepening of digital payments in the country.

- The committee will submit its report within 90 days from its first meeting.

#### **Background:**

- The promotion of digital payments has been one of the primary agendas of the government in the past four years.
- Payments through all electronic forms such as debit and credit cards, mobile wallets, real-time gross settlement (RTGS), national electronic funds transfer (NEFT) and Unified Payments Interface (UPI) have seen a huge rise over the last few years, especially since the government's demonetization exercise in November 2016.
- The newest mode of digital payments, UPI, which was launched in 2016 has witnessed an over 300% rise in transaction volumes in the last year and the growth is seen continuing in the near term.

#### **Terms of reference for the committee:**

- To encourage digitisation of payments and enhance financial inclusion through digitization.
- Reviewing the existing status of digitisation of payments in the country, identifying the current gaps in the ecosystem and suggesting ways to bridge them.
- Assessing the current levels of digital payments in financial inclusion.
- Suggest measures to strengthen the safety and security of digital payments.
- Provide a roadmap for increasing customer confidence and trust while accessing financial services through digital modes.
- Undertake cross-country analysis to identify best practices to accelerate digitisation of the economy and financial inclusion through greater use of digital payments.
- Suggest a medium-term strategy for deepening of digital payments.

**TOPIC: GS III, INDIAN ECONOMY AND ISSUES RELATING TO PLANNING, GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT**

### **9. WEF Report- 'Future of Consumption in Fast-Growth Consumer Market - India'**

**Source: The Hindu**

#### **Why in news:**

The World Economic Forum (WEF) has released the report 'Future of Consumption in Fast-Growth Consumer Market – India'.

- The report was produced based on consumer surveys conducted by Bain & Company across 5,100 households in 30 cities and towns in India and draws from more than 40 interviews with private and public-sector leaders.

#### Highlights of the Report:

- India would become the world's third largest consumer market behind only USA and China by 2030.
- The domestic private consumption that accounts for a major portion of India's gross domestic product (GDP) is expected to develop into a \$6 trillion growth opportunity that would make India the world's third-largest economy by 2030. Currently it is at \$1.5 trillion.
- The report states that as India continues its path as one of the world's most dynamic consumption environments, private and public-sector leaders will have to take shared accountability to ensure such consumption is inclusive and responsible.
- In spite of high growth rates, India needs to address critical societal challenges including skills development and employment of the future workforce, socio-economic inclusion of rural India and creating a healthy and sustainable future for its citizens.
- Growth in income will transform India from a bottom of the pyramid economy to a middle class-led one.
- The consumption growth will be driven by rich and densely populated cities and the thousands of developed rural towns.
- India's top 40 cities will form a USD 1.5 trillion opportunities by 2030 and thousands of small urban towns will also drive an equally large spend in aggregate.
- There will also be an opportunity to unlock nearly USD 1.2 trillion of spending in developed rural areas by improving infrastructure and providing access to organised and online retail.

#### Challenges ahead:

The potential would only materialise if business and policy-makers pursue an inclusive approach towards the economic and consumption growth. The study identified three critical societal challenges that need to be addressed.

- **Skill gaps:** With nearly 10-12 million working-age people expected to emerge in India over the next decade, the country faces a huge challenge in providing the workforce with the right skills. More than one-half of Indian workers will require

reskilling by 2022 to meet the talent demands of the future, stated the report.

- **Access-barriers:** India will have to manage socio-economic inclusion of rural India as, by 2030, 40% of Indians will be urban residents. Physical connectivity, digital connectivity and financial inclusion income is constraining the spending and well-being of rural dwellers, and these 'access-barriers' need to be addressed to ensure social and economic inclusion in India over the next decade.
- Business and policy-makers will have to take the initiative on improving health and liveability for India's citizens by providing them with access to affordable healthcare, promoting sustainable development, and seeking solutions to urban congestion.

#### World Economic Forum:

- World Economic Forum is the International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation.
- It is a not-for-profit foundation and is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The World Economic Forum is committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic, and other leaders of society to shape global, regional, and industry agendas.

## IV. ENVIRONMENT

### TOPIC: GS III, CONSERVATION, ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AND DEGRADATION, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

#### 10. CITES

Source: [cites.org](https://www.cites.org)

#### Why in news:

India has proposed to remove rosewood (*Dalbergia sissoo*) from Appendix II of Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), a multilateral treaty to protect endangered plants and animals.

#### Key points:

- The species is currently part of Appendix II of CITES that has species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled to avoid utilisation incompatible with their survival. But, India doesn't want that for rosewood.
- Apart from *Dalbergia sissoo*, India has also proposed to transfer small clawed otters (*Aonyx cinereus*), smooth coated otters (*Lutrogale perspicillata*), Indian Star Tortoise (*Geochelone*

elegans) from Appendix II to Appendix I, thereby giving more protection to the species. The otter species, according to the proposal, is threatened by international trade and habitat loss.

#### What is India's argument?

- The rosewood species grows at a very fast rate and has the capacity to become naturalised outside its native range, even it is invasive in some parts of the world. The regulation of trade in the species is not necessary to avoid it becoming eligible for inclusion in Appendix I in the near future and the harvest of specimens from the wild is not reducing the wild population to a level at which its survival might be threatened by continued harvesting or other influences.

#### About CITES:

- CITES (The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) is an international agreement between governments. Its aim is to ensure that international trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.
- CITES was signed in Washington D.C. on 3 March 1973 and entered into force on 1 July 1975. (Hence world wildlife day is celebrated on March 3).
- The CITES Secretariat is administered by UNEP and is located at Geneva, Switzerland.
- States that have agreed to be bound by the Convention ('joined' CITES) are known as Parties. Although CITES is legally binding on the Parties – in other words they have to implement the Convention – it does not take the place of national laws. Rather it provides a framework to be respected by each Party, which has to adopt its own domestic legislation to ensure that CITES is implemented at the national level.
- For many years CITES has been among the conservation agreements with the largest membership, with now 183 Parties.

#### Appendices of CITES:

The species covered by CITES are listed in three Appendices, according to the degree of protection they need.

- Appendix I: includes species threatened with extinction. Trade in specimens of these species is permitted only in exceptional circumstances.
- Appendix II: includes species not necessarily threatened with extinction, but in which trade must be controlled in order to avoid utilization incompatible with their survival.
- Appendix III: This Appendix contains species that are protected in at least one country, which has

asked other CITES Parties for assistance in controlling the trade. Changes to Appendix III follow a distinct procedure from changes to Appendices I and II, as each Party's is entitled to make unilateral amendments to it.

**TOPIC: GS III, INFRASTRUCTURE:  
ENERGY, PORTS, ROADS, AIRPORTS,  
RAILWAYS, ETC**

### 11. Promoting energy efficiency in Buildings

**Source: The Hindu**

#### Why in news:

The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) and the Central Public Works Department (CPWD) signed a MoU on promoting energy efficiency in buildings.

- According to the MoU, BEE and CPWD will cooperate on promoting designs and construction of Energy Conservation Building Code (ECBC) compliant new buildings, star rating of CPWD managed buildings across the country with no registration or renewal fee, awareness on energy efficiency in building sector and support for capacity building of CPWD officials in ECBC.
- It is anticipated that this initiative will result in energy saving of more than 260 million units in the first stage with operational savings of about Rs. 100 crore.

#### Roles and Responsibilities:

Role of BEE –

- Processing of application for star rating of buildings
- Preliminary scrutiny of application
- Data verification of CPWD maintained buildings
- Installation of smart meters
- Award of certificate & label
- Support for Energy Efficiency in Buildings
- Support for construction of ECBC complaint buildings
- Efficient coordination with CPWD
- Capacity building of CPWD officials

Role of CPWD–

- Completely filled application for star rating
- Support and facilitation to data verification and monitoring
- Construction of ECBC Complaint buildings
- Support for Energy Efficiency in Buildings
- Efficient coordination with BEE

### Star Rating for Commercial Buildings:

- Having regard to the fact that the rate of growth in commercial building sector is amongst the highest, and that, this sector needs to be moderated in its energy consumption BEE introduced the Star Rating for existing buildings as a voluntary policy measure to reduce the adverse impact of buildings on the environment.
- It is based on the actual performance of a building in terms of its specific energy usage in kwh/sqm/year.
- It rates office buildings on a 1-5 Star scale, with 5 star labelled buildings being the most efficient.
- It is on a voluntary basis and label provided under it is applicable for a period of 5 years from the date of issue.
- It provides public recognition to energy efficient buildings, and creates a “demand side” pull.
- Various categories of buildings like Day Use Office Buildings, BPOs, Shopping Malls and Hospitals in the five climatic zones have been identified under the scheme.

### About Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE):

- Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) is a statutory body under Ministry of Power, set up by the Government of India on 1st March 2002 under the provision of the Energy Conservation Act, 2001.
- The mission is to assist in developing policies and strategies with a thrust on self-regulation and market principles with the primary objective of reducing energy intensity of the Indian economy within the overall framework of the Energy Conservation Act, 2001.
- This will be achieved with active participation of all stakeholders, resulting into accelerated and sustained adoption of energy efficiency in all sectors.

### About Central Public Works Department (CPWD):

- CPWD came into existence in July, 1854 when Lord Dalhousie established a central agency for execution of public works and set up Ajmer Provincial Division.
- It is headed by DG who is also the Principal Technical Advisor to the Government of India.
- It has PAN India presence and has ability to undertake construction of complex projects.
- It has been involved construction of stadiums and other infrastructure requirements for Asian Games 1982 and Commonwealth Games 2010.
- CPWD is now engaged in construction of Afghan Parliament Building (beyond national boundaries).

### ECO Niwas Samhita 2018:

- ECO Niwas Samhita 2018 an Energy Conservation Building Code for residential buildings, to push for energy efficiency in residential sector was launched on December 14, 2018. It aims to promote design and construction of homes including apartments and townships to give benefits of energy efficiency to the occupants. Ministry of Power launched the ECO Niwas Samhita 2018.
- Aim: To benefit the occupants and the environment by promoting energy efficiency in design and construction of homes, apartments and townships.

**TOPIC: GS III, CONSERVATION,  
ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AND  
DEGRADATION, ENVIRONMENTAL  
IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

### 12. Trishna Gas Project of ONGC

**Source: Indian Express**

#### Why in news:

The National Wildlife Board has given its approval for the Trishna Gas project of ONGC which falls in the Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary in the Gomati district of Tripura.

#### About Trishna gas project:

- ONGC has discovered 10-12 gas bearing wells in the Trishna Wildlife sanctuary. The gas extracted from these wells would be supplied to the North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Ltd (NEEPCO) owned 100 MW gas-based thermal power project at Monarchak in Sonamura subdivision of Sipahijala district of Tripura.
- The Tripura unit of ONGC has also committed to provide Rs 25 crore to the state government for carrying out Swacch Bharat Abhiyan.

#### About Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary:

- The Trishna Wildlife Sanctuary was established in 1988. The vegetations in the sanctuary fall under four broad categories of tropical semi-evergreen forest, the east Himalayan lower Bhanar sal, Moist mixed deciduous forest and the Savanah woodland.
- Prominent medicinal plant species are Kurcha, Tulsi, Vasak, Sarpaganda, Rudraksha, Bel, Chirata, and Kalamegh can be found here. The wildlife prominent in the sanctuary comprises of Indian Gaur (bison), Deer, Hooklock Gibbon, Golden Langur, Capped Langur, Pheasants and Reptiles.

#### National Wildlife Board:

- National Board for Wild Life is a statutory organization constituted under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

- It is an apex body to review all wildlife-related matters and approves projects in and around national parks and sanctuaries.
- The National Board for Wild Life is chaired by the Prime Minister, Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is the vice-chairman of the Board and the members include 15 non-government members, 19 ex-officio members and 10 government officials such as secretaries.

**TOPIC: GS III, CONSERVATION, ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AND DEGRADATION, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

### **13. Asian Waterbird Census (AWC)**

**Source: The Hindu**

**Why in news:**

A Waterbird survey conducted in the Upper Kuttanad region of Kerala has recorded 16,767 birds of 47 continental and local species. The survey, conducted as part of the annual Asian Waterbird Census, has spotted three new species — Greater flamingo, Grey-headed lapwing, and Blue-cheeked bee-eater.

- However, compared to the previous years, the number of winged visitors to the region has declined drastically.

**What are Waterbirds?**

- According to Wetlands International (WI), waterbirds are defined as species of birds that are ecologically dependent on wetlands. These birds are considered to be an important health indicator of wetlands of a region.

**About Asian Waterbird Census (AWC):**

- Asian Waterbird Census is an annual event in which thousands of volunteers across Asia and Australasia count waterbirds in the wetlands of their country. This event happens every January. This event is coordinated by wetlands International and forms part of global waterbird monitoring programme called the International Waterbird Census (IWC).
- Asian Waterbird Census (AWC) was started in the year 1987. Its main focus is to monitor the status of waterbirds and the wetlands. AWC also aims to create public awareness on various issues concerning wetlands and waterbird conservation. Each year the census is carried out as a voluntary activity.
- In India, the AWC is annually coordinated by the Bombay Natural history Society (BNHS) and Wetlands International.

**TOPIC: GS III, CONSERVATION, ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AND DEGRADATION, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

### **14. National Clean Air Programme**

**Sources: PIB, Livemint**

**Why in news:**

The Union Minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan launched the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP).

- The programme aims to tackle the challenge of increasing pollution problem across the country in a comprehensive manner.

**About the Programme:**

- NCAP is a five-year action plan with a tentative target of 20-30% reduction in concentrations of PM10 and PM2.5 by 2024, with 2017 as the base year.
- The plan covers 102 non-attainment cities, across 23 states and Union territories, which were identified by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on the basis of their ambient air quality data between 2011 and 2015.

**Non-attainment cities:**

Cities are considered as Non-attainment cities, if they were consistently showing poorer air quality than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Cities included under the list of Non-attainment cities Delhi, Varanasi, Bhopal, Kolkata, Noida, Muzaffarpur, and Mumbai.

- The centre plans to scale up the air quality monitoring network across India under the programme.
- Studies would be conducted across 102 non-attainment cities to ascertain pollution sources and the extent of their contribution.
- The Apex committee in the Ministry of Environment would periodically review the progress of these components on the basis of appropriate indicators, which will be evolved.
- Each city would be asked to develop its own action plan for implementation based on sources of pollution.
- A three-tier system, including real-time physical data collection, data archiving, and an action trigger system in all 102 cities, besides extensive plantation plans, research on clean-technologies, landscaping of major arterial roads, and stringent industrial standards are proposed under the plan.
- State-level plans of e-mobility in the two-wheeler sector, rapid augmentation of charging infrastructure, stringent implementation of BS-VI

norms, boosting public transportation system, and adoption of third-party audits for polluting industries are proposed part of the plan.

- The plan document is not binding on the states since the document is not a legal document.

**Concerns:**

- The Environmentalists criticised the plan for not making it legally binding. The Environmentalists demand a more stringent action to ensure the safety and well being of millions of lives risk because of the continuously growing air pollution crisis.

**V. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

**TOPIC: GS II, IMPACT OF DECISIONS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES ON INDIA**

**15. Post-Brexit immigration system and India**

**Source: The Hindu**

**Context**

The British government recently unveiled plans for its post-Brexit immigration regime, which it insists would create a level-playing field for EU workers and non-EU workers based on skills levels and mean that workers from Europe would not have priority over those from Asia.



**Details of the UK immigration proposals:**

- End to free movement-Everyone will be required to obtain a permission if they want to come to the UK to work or study.
- Immigration targets – There will be no cap on the numbers of skilled workers but there will be targets. The Tory party has a longstanding commitment, flowing from Theresa May’s time as home secretary of reducing net migration to below 100,000 a year.

- No access to British welfare system – Those who enter under the new system will have no “right to access to public funds, or to settle.
- New system will favour skilled workers. The government says the policy “will ensure the UK remains a hub for international talent from the EU and the rest of the world”.
- Low-skilled workers – To address concerns of employers particularly in construction and social care, it is proposed that low-skilled workers will be able to enter the UK for a maximum of 12 months with a cooling-off period of a further 12 months to prevent people effectively working in the UK permanently. Low-skilled workers in this category will be able to move between employers without sponsorship. No access to public funds, a switch to another visa, or family reunion.
- £30,000 salary threshold – There will be a salary threshold but this has been put out to a 12-month consultation period, so this could change if government succumbs to pressure from the business community, which says the minimum income is set too high for most sectors.

**Impact of the plan on India:**

- Indians may benefit from the new rules as workers from EU will not be the priority anymore. India is known globally for its high skilled labour.
- The focus is on highly-skilled migration as opposed to low-skilled workers however, an added obligation on companies being required to sponsor families of such high-skilled professionals may prove a hurdle in the long term.

**TOPIC: GS II, IMPACT OF DECISIONS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES ON INDIA**

**16. Multilateral impact of US withdrawal from Afghanistan**

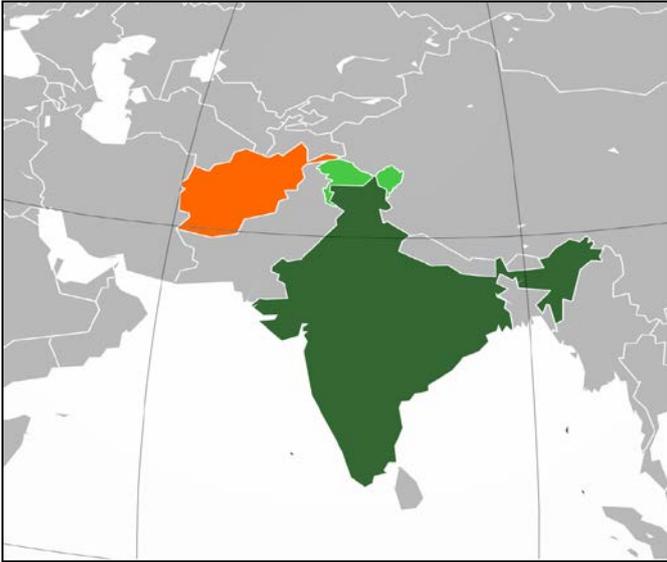
**Source: The Hindu**

**Why in news:**

United States of America has recently announced to withdraw a large number of its troops from Afghanistan which will have multilateral impact on India and many neighbouring countries.

**Consequences of US withdrawal from Afghanistan:**

- This decision will have major consequences for peace in Afghanistan and the neighborhood, which may result into chaos, a gradual descent into a civil war is likely as various regional stakeholders try to reshape the battlefield in accordance with their own strategic priorities.



- Concerns for India
  - (a) US withdrawal will lead Taliban to control major part of the country which even controls around 45% of the country which raise security concerns in India, given their role in sponsoring terrorism in Kashmir and supporting Pakistan.
  - (b) India, with China started a joint training project for Afghan diplomats. They could expand cooperation by facilitating Afghanistan's full membership of the SCO.
- China's Role:
  - (a) US withdrawal will raise security concern for China as it shares part of a border with Afghanistan which is unstable due to Uighur separatists who are supported by Taliban.
  - (b) China would be adversely affected by war and chaos, which could spill over into north-western China, Pakistan, and Central Asia.
  - (c) As all these areas are vital in its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), peace in Afghanistan is critical.
  - (d) It will also affect China's investment in Afghanistan like rail link running from far eastern China via Uzbekistan to the river port of Hairatan in northern Afghanistan, could reduce the time taken to make shipments, from six months by road, to just two weeks and many other areas like health, mining etc.
  - (e) That is why China announced its intention to build regional consensus on Afghanistan's security. It has also joined the U.S. and Russia in several peace talks with the Taliban and is part of the four-nation Quadrilateral Coordination Group (with Afghanistan, Pakistan and the U.S.).
  - (f) It is giving military aid to Afghanistan, with the express intent of fighting terrorism and increasing security cooperation.

- Russia and Central Asia:
  - (a) If the U.S. withdrawal exacerbates conflict, southern Russia will also face the threat of an extremist spillover and drug menace. Therefore, Russia and its Central Asian 'near abroad' would be willing to expand their cooperation with China to curb insecurity.
  - (b) Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, which share a border with northern Afghanistan, are concerned about the Taliban and other terrorist groups becoming powerful in Afghanistan, and posing a threat.
  - (c) That is why the SCO's programme for 2019-21 also calls for combating terrorism, and generally enhancing security cooperation.
- China Pakistan Angle:
  - (a) Pakistan's leverage in Afghanistan is set to grow due to the rise to Taliban in the country as Pakistan has always supported Taliban in terms of military, intelligence, safe havens and bases on its soil.
  - (b) It is also expected to get more attention by the major powers like Russia and China given its importance for Taliban.

#### Way forward for India:

- India should start engaging in dialogue with the Taliban. There is no doubt that the Taliban will be a major player in the politics of Afghanistan in future. They are also engaged in direct talks with China, Russia, the Central Asian states and others. The Americans have also begun sustained dialogue with the Taliban. Even Shia regime Iran has started engaging with Taliban. India, which has till now refrained from talk with Taliban can take help from Iran for breaking the ice.
- India should take other regional powers into confidence especially China in cooperating in Afghanistan; Chinese President and Indian Prime Minister already agreed in Wuhan summit on working on joint projects there.

**TOPIC: GS II, IMPACT OF DECISIONS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES ON INDIA**

### 17. Changes to H-1B Visas

**Source: The Hindu**

**Why in news:**

US President has recently announced his plan to change the H-1B programme that grants temporarily visas to highly educated immigrants who work in specialty occupations such as technology or medicine for bringing both simplicity and certainty for

immigrants to stay, including a potential path to citizenship.

#### Impact of the change in the visa policy:

- It will increase the chances that beneficiaries with a master's or higher degree from a US institution of higher education would be selected under the H-1B cap and that H-1B visas would be awarded to the most-skilled and highest-paid beneficiaries.
- Shifting to electronic registration (which has been taken into account) would reduce overall costs for petitioners and create a more efficient and cost-effective H-1B cap petition process for the agency.
- It would help alleviate massive administrative burdens on the immigration agencies since the agency would no longer need to physically receive and handle thousands of H-1B petitions and supporting documentation before conducting the cap selection process which will reduce wait times for cap selection notifications.

#### Important US Visas:

##### 1. H-1B Visa

- The H-1B category is an expedient and lawful method to bring foreign-born professionals temporarily to the United States, and therefore one of the most widely sought after visa classifications for employment in the United States.
- The H-1B is a non-immigrant visa in the United States; it allows U.S. employers to temporarily employ foreign workers in specialty occupations.
- H-4 visa is a work permit issued to the spouses of H1-B visa holders under a special order by the previous Obama administration.
- H-4 visa allows work permits for spouses who otherwise could not be employed without waiting for their spouses to receive permanent resident status, a process that can take a decade or longer.

##### 2. H-2B Visa

- The H-2B visa non-immigrant program permits employers to hire foreign workers to come temporarily to the United States and perform temporary non-agricultural services or labor on a one-time, seasonal, peakload or intermittent basis.

##### 3. L-1 Visa

- The L-1 visa facilitates the temporary transfer of foreign worker in the managerial, executive or specialized knowledge category to the U.S. to continue employment with an office of the same employer, its parent branch, subsidiary or affiliate.
- L-1 visa is a temporary non-immigrant visa that allows L-2 visa for the spouse and minor

unmarried children under 21 years of age. L-1 visa holder is known as intra-company transferee.

- Even though L-1 visa was initially made for large multinational companies to transfer their employees to the U.S., it provides small or start-up companies abroad to expand their business and services to the U.S.

## VI. SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### TOPIC: GS III, SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENTS

#### 18. Albumin better indicator of Diabetes:

##### Study

**Source:** The Hindu

**Why in news:**

Based on findings of their new research, scientists at the National Chemical Laboratory, Pune have suggested that measuring levels of free albumin and albumin attached to glucose molecules in the blood can be a better diagnosis test for diabetes and help in its management.

**Present Procedure:**

- The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends using levels of glycated (or glucose-bound) hemoglobin in blood for diagnosis of diabetes. The routinely prescribed tests for fasting blood sugar levels vary due to various factors like stress levels, time of collection, diet and medications taken previous day etc.
- Glycation is binding of glucose to protein or lipid molecules and glycated hemoglobin is the percentage of glucose bound to hemoglobin.

**Challenges with the present procedure:**

- The average lifespan of the Hemoglobin is four months. Hence the test results predict the diabetic condition of an individual from the previous four months.
- The levels of glycated haemoglobin in blood are influenced by many factors like anaemia, iron deficiency, pregnancy. Hence the current results may not necessarily indicate accurate results.

**More about the new Study:**

- The new researches have shown that glycation of both albumin and haemoglobin occurs at lower levels of albumin in blood. When the albumin level decreases or gets saturated with bound glucose, other proteins like haemoglobin are exposed to glucose and their glycation increases. Hence it is predicted that levels of albumin and glycated albumin can also help in predicting the onset of diabetes.

- The new study proposes albumin and glycated albumin levels quantified in conjunction with glycated haemoglobin can provide for better diagnosis and management of diabetes.

**TOPIC: GS III, AWARENESS IN SPACE**

## **19. NASA Discovers New Planet**

**Source: The Hindu**

**Why in news:**

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) which launched Transiting Exoplanet Survey Satellite (TESS) for searching exoplanets in April, 2018 has discovered a third small planet outside our solar system.

- The new planet is named HD 21749b.

**About HD 21749b:**

- The new planet HD 21749b is outside our solar system and orbits a dwarf star 53 light years away.
- HD 21749b orbits a bright star in the constellation Reticulum.
- It has the longest orbital period of all the three discoveries made by TESS.
- HD 21749b orbits its star in a relatively leisurely 36 days.
- It is predicted that the surface of the new planet is likely around 300 degrees Fahrenheit, which is relatively cool, given its proximity to its star, which is almost as bright as the sun.

**Other planet discovered by TESS:**

- The other two discoveries made by the TESS probe are Pi Mensae b and LHS 3844b. Pi Mensae b has an orbit of 6.3 days and LHS 3844b has an orbit of just 11 hours.

**Note: To know more about TESS, refer earlier Pabulum Current Affairs Magazines.**

## **VII. PRELIMS/MISCELLANEOUS**

### **20. Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana**

- Minister of State for Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has recently updated the Parliament about the revised operational guidelines to ensure better transparency, accountability and timely payment of claims to the farmers.
- Ministry cleared that the provision of 12% interest rate per annum to be paid by the insurance company to farmers for delay in settlement claims beyond 10 days of prescribed cut off date for payment of claims.
- State Government have to pay 12% interest rate for delay in release of State share of Subsidy

beyond three months of prescribed cut off date/submission of requisition by Insurance Companies.

**About Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojna:**

- Replacing the National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) and Modified National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (MNAIS) Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana was launched in 2016 by the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare with the aim to provide comprehensive insurance coverage against crop loss.
- Covers kharif, rabi crops as well as annual commercial and horticultural crops. It also covers post-harvest losses apart from yield loss.
- It will also provide farm level assessment for localised calamities including hailstorms, unseasonal rains, landslides and inundation, pests and diseases.
- Proposes mandatory use of remote sensing, smart phones and drones for quick estimation of crop loss to speed up the claim process.
- It also provides insurance benefits to Landless labourers.
- Unique features:
  - (a) Open to all farmers
  - (b) No capping in premium and single countrywide premium rate. It is 1.5%, 2% and 5% for all Rabi, Kharif and annual horticultural/commercial crops, respectively.
  - (c) No upper cap on government subsidy, even if the balance premium is 90 percent, the government will bear it.

### **21. National Bamboo Mission**

- The restructured National Bamboo Mission (NBM) was approved in April, 2018 for implementation till the end of 14th Finance Commission i.e. 2019-20.
- It aims to inter-alia supplement farm income of farmers with focus on the development of complete value chain of bamboo sector linking growers with industry.
- It is being implemented in non-forest government land, farmers field in states where it has social, commercial and economical advantage, including the bamboo rich States of North Eastern region and other states of the country.
- 17 States have so far been covered under the Mission.
- Financial assistance to North Eastern States is provided in the ratio of 90:10 between Central & State Government.

## **22. E-Prisons**

- Ministry of home affairs has recently provided information regarding the implantation of the E-prison in the country.
- According the ministry, all states and UTs except the states of Manipur, Nagaland, Sikkim and UT of Lakshadweep, have implemented the E-prisons network developed by the National Informatics Centre (NIC) with the financial support from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

### **About e- Prisons:**

- It aims to introduce efficiency in prison management through digitization.
- The Scope of this project is to computerize and integrate all the activities related to prison and prisoner management in the jail.
- E-prisons project supplements the Prisoner Information Management system (PIMS), developed by National Informatics Centre, which provides a centralized approach for recording and managing prisoner information and generating different kinds of reports.
- Prisoner's Basic Details, Family Details, Biometrics (fingerprint), Photograph, Medical Details, Prisoner Case History, Prisoner Movements, Punishment details etc can also be accessed.
- The availability of these details on an electronic platform will be useful to track the status of prisoners and smooth functioning of the prison system.

## **23. Swadesh Darshan Project**

- The chief minister of Meghalaya has recently inaugurated the project "Development of North East Circuit: Umiam (Lake View) - U Lum Sohpetbneng- Mawdiangdiang - Orchid Lake Resort under Swadesh Darshan Scheme of Ministry of Tourism, Government of India This is the first Swadesh Darshan project of Union Tourism Ministry in the state.

### **About Swadesh Darshan Project:**

- It was launched by Union Tourism Ministry in 2015 with objective to develop theme-based tourist circuits in the country.
- These tourist circuits will be developed on principles of high tourist value, competitiveness and sustainability in an integrated manner.
- Under this scheme, 13 thematic circuits have been identified for development. They are Buddhist Circuit, North-East India Circuit, Coastal Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, Krishna Circuit, Desert Circuit, Eco Circuit, Wildlife Circuit, Tribal Circuit, Rural

Circuit, Spiritual Circuit, Ramayana Circuit and Heritage Circuit.

- It is 100% centrally funded scheme for project components undertaken for public funding.
- It also has provision for leveraging voluntary funding under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Central Public Sector Undertakings and corporate sector.

## **24. Web- Wonder Women Campaign**

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, has recently launched an online campaign, '#www : Web-Wonder Women'.
- The Campaign aims to discover and celebrate the exceptional achievements of women, who have been driving positive agenda of social change via social media.

## **25. e-NAM**

- Recently, first time inter state trade took place between mandis of two different States under e- NAM between farmers of Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

### **About e- NAM:**

- National Agriculture Market is a pan-India electronic trading (e-trading) portal which seeks to network the existing physical regulated wholesale market (known as APMC market) through a virtual platform to create a unified national market for agricultural commodities.
- It promotes better marketing opportunities for the farmers to sell their produce through online competitive and transparent price discovery system and online payment facility.
- It also promotes prices commensurate with quality of produce. The e-NAM portal provides single window services for all APMC related information and services. This includes commodity arrivals, quality & prices, buy & sell offers & e-payment settlement directly into farmers' account, among other services.
- Farmers can access the information on e-NAM easily through their mobile phones from anywhere.
- This online trading platform aims at reducing transaction costs, bridging information asymmetry and helps in expanding the market access for farmers.

## **26. Hunar Haat**

- Union Minority Affairs Minister has recently inaugurated "Hunar Haat" at New Delhi.

### **About Hunar Haat:**

- Hunar Haat exhibitions are organised by the Ministry of Minority affairs under its USTAAD (Upgrading the Skills & Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development) scheme.
- USTAAD scheme aims to preserve the heritage of traditional arts and crafts of minority communities, build the capacity of traditional crafts persons and artisans and establish linkages of traditional skills with the global market.
- Together with boosting the skill of craftsmen, weavers and artisans engaged in the traditional ancestral work, USTAAD scheme aims to enhance the access to the traditional arts and crafts, so that the rich heritage of the minority communities are preserved for future generations.

### **27. Philip Kotler Award**

- The Prime Minister of India has been recently awarded first-ever Philip Kotler Presidential award.

#### **About Philip Kotler award:**

- This award is offered annually to the leader of a nation, a statement from the Prime minister's office.
- The Award focuses on the triple bottom-line of People, Profit and Planet.
- Prof. Philip Kotler is a world renowned Professor of Marketing at North-western University, Kellogg School of Management.

### **28. Womaniya on GeM**

- Government e Marketplace (GeM) has recently launched "Womaniya on GeM".
- It is an initiative to enable women entrepreneurs and women self-help groups to sell handicrafts and handloom, accessories, jute and coir products, home décor and office furnishings, directly to various Government ministries, departments and institutions.
- The initiative seeks to develop women entrepreneurship on the margins of society to achieve gender-inclusive economic growth.
- It will spur hyper-local economic opportunities for women entrepreneurs and address goals and objectives under United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- Government e Marketplace is a 100 percent government owned company setup under the aegis of Ministry of Commerce and Industry for procurement of common use goods and services by Government ministries, departments and CPSEs.
- GeM was setup in 2016.

### **29. Renuka Dam**

- The Centre has recently signed an agreement with chief Ministers of five States — Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh — to restart construction of the Renuka multipurpose dam project in the Upper Yamuna Basin.

#### **The Renuka Multipurpose Dam Project:**

- The Renuka dam project has been conceived as a storage project on the Giri river (a tributary of the Yamuna) in Sirmour district of Himachal Pradesh. The project envisages making a 148-metre-high dam for supplying water to Delhi and other basin States. It will also generate 40 MW of power.
- After the construction of the dam, the flow of the Giri river will increase by about 110%, which will help meet the drinking water needs of Delhi and other basin States.
- Water from the Renuka dam will be used by U.P., Haryana and National Capital Territory of Delhi from Hathnikund barrage, by the NCT of Delhi from Wazirabad barrage and by U.P., Haryana and Rajasthan from the Okhla barrage.
- The origins of the project in fact go back to May 1994, when the governments of Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the utilisation and allocation of the waters of the upper Yamuna River which included the Renuka storage dam to be constructed in Sirmour district of HP.
- The project was scheduled for completion by November 2014. The project construction was stayed by the National Environment Appellate Authority/National Green Tribunal in 2010-11 due to objections on the Environment Clearance granted to the project.

### **30. Monkey Fever**

- The outbreak of Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD), also known as 'monkey fever' in Malnad region of the district Shivamogga has led to four new cases. With this, the total number of KFD cases in the district since December 2018 has reached 62.

#### **Kyasanur Forest Disease (KFD):**

- Kyasanur Forest disease (KFD) or Monkey Fever is a tick-borne viral hemorrhagic fever endemic to South Asia.
- The disease is caused by a virus belonging to the family Flaviviridae, which also includes yellow fever and dengue fever.
- The symptoms of the disease include a high fever with frontal headaches, followed by haemorrhagic

symptoms, such as bleeding from the nasal cavity, throat, and gums, as well as gastrointestinal bleeding.

- The virus was identified in 1957 when it was isolated from a sick monkey from the Kyasanur Forest of Karnataka. Since then, between 400-500 humans cases per year have been reported.
- Hard ticks (*Hemaphysalis spinigera*) are the reservoir of the KFD virus and once infected, remain so for life.
- Rodents, shrews, and monkeys are common hosts for KFDV after being bitten by an infected tick. KFDV can cause epizootics with high fatality in primates.
- Transmission to humans may occur after a tick bite or contact with an infected animal, most importantly a sick or recently dead monkey. No person-to-person transmission has been described.
- The disease as of now is stated to be transmitted through monkeys. Large animals such as goats, cows, and sheep may become infected with KFD but play a limited role in the transmission of the disease. Furthermore, there is no evidence of disease transmission via the unpasteurised milk of any of these animals.
- People with recreational or occupational exposure to rural or outdoor settings (e.g., hunters, herders, forest workers, farmers) are potentially at risk for infection by contact with infected ticks.
- Seasonality is another important risk factor as more cases are reported during the dry season, from November through June.
- Diagnosis can be made in the early stage of illness by molecular detection by PCR or virus isolation from blood. Later, serologic testing using enzyme-linked Immunosorbent Serologic Assay (ELISA) can be performed.

### **31. Indus Food - 2019**

Indus Food-II will be held on 14th and 15th January, 2019, at India Expo Mart, Greater Noida.

- The event is aimed at promoting India as a strong and reliable exporter of food and beverage products to the world.
- Indus Food 2019 will promote value addition to India's agriculture exports and integrate Indian farmers and agricultural products with global value chains.
- Theme: 'World Food Supermarket'.

### **About Indus Food:**

- Indus Food is a platform of its kind exclusively devoted to enhancing Indian exports in F&B sector. The event is aimed at promoting India as a strong and reliable exporter of food and beverage products to the world.
- It enables B2B engagements of buyers and suppliers, after careful business matchmaking, which takes care of precise business requirements of each participant, and enables him to pick and choose whom to meet.

### **32. Macedonia renamed as the Republic of Northern Macedonia**

- The Parliament of Macedonia has passed the resolution to amend the constitution of the country to rename it as the Republic of Northern Macedonia.

### **33. Hawaiian tree snail is the first extinction of 2019**

- George, the last known *Achatinella apexfulva* - a Hawaiian tree snail, died on New Year's Day 2019, making his species the first to be declared officially extinct in 2019.

### **34. Tata Steel's Netherlands plant recognised as the Factory of the Future**

- The World Economic Forum has recognised Tata Steel's plant at IJmuiden in the Netherlands as Manufacturing Lighthouse with state-of-the-art production facilities which successfully adopt and integrate the cutting-edge technologies of the future and drive financial and operational impact.

### **Manufacturing Lighthouses:**

- The World Economic Forum organizes a network of leading intelligent production companies as Manufacturing Lighthouses under its 'Shaping the Future of Production' initiative to allow the exchange of knowledge and promote collaborations in the area of the 'Fourth Industrial Revolution' in production.
- These Manufacturing Lighthouses showcases how best a strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution be developed by training employees, cooperating with other parties, implementing changes in the workplace and in the value chain through greater efficiency and contribute to reducing the climate footprint of production companies by 50 per cent.

**Question:**

1. Discuss the role of moral code of conduct in ensuring fairness and transparency of election in the country. What are the reasons for reviewing the moral code of conduct. Do you think that the c-vigil app will help in preventing the violation of moral code of conduct?
2. Although the 124<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment is considered to be the implementation of directive principle of state policy which are fundamental for the governance, they are open for the judicial scrutiny. Discuss various issues associated with this amendment.
3. Critically analyse the key provisions of the DNA technology bill. Do you think that it will a remarkable step towards prevention of crime in the country? Discuss various issues associated with the bill.
4. Discuss the menace of social boycott in the Indian society and suggest measures to eliminate it.
5. Discuss the key provisions of the post immigration policy of United Kingdom and its impact on India.
6. US withdrawal from Afghanistan will not only affect India but all the regional powers. Discuss