

I. POLITY & GOVERNANCE

TOPIC: GS II, CONSTITUTIONAL AND OTHER REGULATORY BODIES

1. Issues related to the Election

Commission of India

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

- A PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court to strengthen the Election Commission of India (ECI) with a proposal to create an independent mechanism to appoint the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and Election Commissioners (ECs) who are presently appointed by the government of the day, without following any defined criteria.
- It challenged Clause (5) of the Article 324 of the Constitution, according to which safeguards the removal of CEC but the ECs can be removed on the recommendation of the CEC and are treated as regional commissioners.

Important decisions taken towards ensuring free and fair election:

- Creation of ECI by the constituent assembly with legal back up and the resources to develop and enforce a transparent electoral system.
- It was made a single, centralised body for elections to the Lok Sabha and State legislatures to avoid any partisan action in the States.
- Constituent Assembly provided that the CEC could only be removed through impeachment.
- Constitution provided for tribunals to be set up by the ECI to hear election petitions but later the ECI itself recommended that election petitions be heard by the judiciary and it became the part of judicial review.

Loopholes in the safeguards of ECI:

- It was left for the legislature for drafting a suitable law for the appointment of the CEC and other ECs the law so framed does not clearly state any qualification or procedure for appointment.
- CEC could only be removed through impeachment but this safeguard was not provided to the other ECs.
- There have been controversies over appointments of ECs, allegations of partisanship, and new problems such as of voter bribery and paid news, which the ECI has not been able to address so far.

Way forward:

- Like CEC, ECs should also have security of tenure.

- All the expenditure ECI should be charged on Consolidated Fund and it should have an independent secretariat & rule making authority. It is also supported by the Law commission.
- ECI should also have penal powers apart from recommendatory powers.

TOPIC: GS II, CENTRE-STATE RELATIONS

2 .Autonomy and Jurisdiction of CBI

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

Recently, Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal have withdrawn their general consent to the CBI to operate within their territories.

About CBI:

- It is the premier investigating agency of India and national agency with police powers, operating under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.
- It was set up in 1963 by the home ministry on the recommendations of Santhanam Committee and draws its power from the Delhi Special Police Establishment (DSPE) Act, 1945.
- Under Section 5 of the Act, the central government can extend its powers and jurisdiction to the States, for investigation of specified offences.
- However, this power is restricted by Section 6, which says its powers and jurisdiction cannot be extended to any State without the consent of the government of that State.

State's power to bar CBI from functioning in their Territory:

- As policing is a state subject, the law allows the agency to function in the states only with the consent of the States.
- The most common reason for withdrawal of consent is a strain in Centre-State relations, and allegation that the agency is being misused against Opposition parties.
- The decision by Andhra Pradesh and West Bengal has come amid concerns of opposition parties that central agencies such as the CBI, Enforcement Directorate and Income Tax Department are being used against them for setting political scores.
- Taking back the general consent restricts the CBI from instituting new cases in the state concerned but as decided by the Supreme Court the withdrawal of consent applies prospectively and CBI will investigate the existing cases.
- In case of demand for investigation by the CBI, the Supreme Court has made it clear that when it or a

High Court directs that a particular investigation be handed over to the CBI, there is no need for any consent under the DSPE Act.

Issues regarding the autonomy of the CBI:

- Credibility crisis, Lack of autonomy, Pendency of cases, Corruption.
- The Supreme Court has termed CBI as a caged parrot having many masters in the Coalgate scam case in 2013 and called for granting greater autonomy to it.

Various proposals for making CBI more autonomous:

- Demands forwarded by the CBI for its functional, administrative and financial autonomy:
 - Vesting its Director with the powers of ex-officio Secretary to the Govt of India which would allow the Director to directly report to the Minister of Personnel.
 - Complete power for its director to appoint public prosecutor in its cases to have greater autonomy in politically sensitive investigations.
 - Three-year tenure for its Director as opposed to the current two-year tenure
 - Financial autonomy for the CBI.
- Recommendation of Department-Related Parliamentary Standing Committee called for a separate statute for the CBI for making it an independent and accountable agency. The Union government has turned it down citing changes in the federal structure of the constitution.

Way forward:

- Making Lokpal more powerful by:
 1. Allowing the Lokpal to decide cases which CBI takes up.
 2. CBI to report to Lokpal for investigation of such cases.
 3. Supervising power of Lokpal over CBI.
- Substituting the archaic DPSE act by new CBI Act.
- Increasing the number of judges, prosecutors and support staff for CBI.
- Having dedicated cadre for CBI.

TOPIC: GS II, ASPECTS OF GOVERNANCE

3. Prison Reforms

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

The Supreme Court has recently highlighted the miserable conditions being faced by the undertrials in the prisons.

About the Undertrials:

- Undertrial is a person who is in judicial custody or remand during investigation and not yet convicted.
- Currently, undertrial prisoners accounted for 62% of India's prison population, against the world average of 18-20%.
- Problems faced:
 1. Criminalising affect turning an innocent into a hardcore criminal.
 2. Prison violence
 3. Health problems due to unhygienic conditions.
 4. Social stigmatization.
 5. Drug addiction.
 6. Sexual abuse.

Reasons for increasing number of Undertrials:

- Low population-judge ratio in India (12 judge per ten lakh) leads to huge pendency of cases with undertrials.
- Low 'Police- Population' ratio leading to delay in investigation and trial process.
- A large number of Undertrials are poor, illiterate and belonging to the marginalized communities thus cannot afford to hire public defender and legal aid to secure bail.

Findings and recommendations of Law commission (268th Report):

- The fact that the rich and the affluent get bail with ease while others languish in prison.
- The Bail system is inadequate and inefficient to accomplish its purpose.
- Bail practices should be fair and evidence-based.
- Bail decisions should not be influenced by factors such as gender, race, ethnicity, financial conditions or social status.
- Amendment in the Section 436A of the Code of Criminal Procedure enabling reduced sentence if the prisoner completes a specific duration of sentence.
- Remission be granted to those who had spent the whole period for stipulated crime as undertrials.
- No needless arrests and magistrates should not make mechanical remand orders
- It gives an illustrative list of conditions that could be imposed in lieu of sureties or financial bonds
- Bail applications should be disposed off within a week.

- The arresting officer should inform the person about the available legal remedies including applying for bail.

Way forward:

- Implement Code of Criminal Procedure (Amendment) Bill 2006 which limits the powers of arrest by police.
- Scope of compoundable offences under the IPC and other laws should be widened. They are offences where, the complainant enter into a compromise, and agrees to have the charges dropped against the accused.
- Under trials charged with petty crimes can be put in reformatory homes instead of prison.
- Implementation of Section 167 of the CrPC which sets a time limit for police investigation in case of accused under-trial prisoners.
- Increment in the judge- population ratio.
- More use of Plea-bargaining for reducing litigation and duration of sentence.

TOPIC: GS II, CENTER-STATE ISSUE

4. Issues related to Article 370

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

The Supreme Court has recently declined to entertain a fresh petition challenging Article 370, which gives special autonomous status to Jammu and Kashmir.

Argument of the plea:

- The plea has challenged the validity of both Article 35A and Article 370.
- It argues that four representatives from Kashmir were part of the Constituent Assembly involved in the drafting of the Constitution and the State of Jammu and Kashmir was never accorded any special status in the Constitution.
- Article 370 was only a 'temporary provision' to help bring normalcy and Constitution makers did not intend Article 370 to be a tool to bring permanent amendments, like Article 35A, in the Constitution.
- Article 35A is against the spirit of oneness of India. Restricting citizens from other States from getting employment or buying property in J&K is a violation of their fundamental rights.

Article 35A:

- It empowers the Jammu and Kashmir state's legislature to define "permanent residents" of the state and provide special rights and privileges to

those permanent residents. (*Refer to earlier issues for 'permanent residents'*)

Arguments against Article 35A:

- It treats non-permanent residents of J&K as second-class citizens. Such persons are not eligible for employment under the State government and are also debarred from contesting elections.
- Meritorious students are denied scholarships and they cannot even seek redress in any court of law.
- The issues of refugees who migrated to J&K during Partition are still not treated as 'State subjects' under the J&K Constitution.
- The laws enacted in pursuance of Article 35A are ultra vires of the fundamental rights conferred by Part III of the Constitution, especially, and not limited to, Articles 14 (right to equality) and 21 (protection of life).

Arguments in favour of Legality of Article 35A:

- Article 370 (1) (d) empowers the President of India to extend with requisite exceptions and modifications the other provisions of the Indian Constitution to J&K as may be necessary.
- The Delhi Agreement of 1952 followed Article 370. According to the Clause 2 of the agreement, the State Legislature of J&K was given power to make laws for conferring special rights and privileges on the 'state subjects'.
- Article 35A follows the Instrument of Accession and the guarantee given to the State of J&K that the State's autonomy will not be disturbed.
- Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand and such other states also have laws where no outsider can buy land.

Article 370:

- Article 370 of the Indian constitution grants special autonomous status to the state of Jammu and Kashmir. The article is drafted in Part XXI of the Constitution, which relates to Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions.
- The state's constituent assembly was empowered to recommend the articles of the Indian constitution to be applied to the state or to abrogate Article 370 altogether. After the state constituent assembly has dissolved itself without recommending abrogation, Article 370 is deemed to have become a permanent feature of the Indian constitution.
- In the case of Jammu and Kashmir, the representatives to the Constituent Assembly requested that only those provisions of the Indian Constitution that corresponded to the original Instrument of Accession should be applied to the State.

- The Article 370 was incorporated into the Indian Constitution, which stipulated that the other articles of the Constitution that gave powers to the Central Government would be applied to Jammu and Kashmir only with the concurrence of the State's constituent assembly.

TOPIC: GS II, ASPECTS OF GOVERNANCE

5. Prevention of Corruption Act

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

The Supreme Court has recently ordered the government to respond to a petition challenging two amendments to the Prevention of Corruption Act 1988.

About Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988:

- It consolidated the provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1947, some sections of the Indian Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code, and the Criminal Law Act, 1952.
- It enlarged the scope of the term 'public servant' and included a large number of employees within its ambit. However, MPs and MLAs have been kept out of the ambit of the Act.
- If the offence against the public servant is proved in the courts, it is punishable with imprisonment of not less than six months but extending to a maximum period of five years.
- In this Act, the person giving the bribe was legally seen as a victim and not criminally liable.

Reasons for amending the act:

- Section 13 of the Act holds public servants culpable for securing a pecuniary advantage for another which resulted in many honest officials being prosecuted even when they gained nothing and merely exercised their discretion in favour of someone. This provision can be easily misused and affects decision making within the government.
- It makes the honest officials to hesitate in making decisions if their actions are likely to be suspected and scrutinized.

Provisions of Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill:

- It redefines the term criminal misconduct to two offences only i.e. misappropriating Public Property for private gratification and amassing unexplained wealth beyond known sources of income.
- It seeks to make offering bribe to a public servant a criminal offence which is in line with UN Convention against Corruption. However this provision doesn't apply where the people are forced to give bribe provided the incidence is reported to authorities within a week.
- It makes mandatory for taking prior approval of relevant Government or competent authority to conduct any investigation into offence alleged to have been committed by a public servant. Such approval will be not necessary in cases that involve arrest of person on spot on charge of taking a bribe.

 <p>Bribery What is new</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Giving a bribe is now an offence, punishable by a 7-year prison term ▪ Except when one is forced to give a bribe. But it should be reported within seven days ▪ Bribe is termed 'undue advantage', defined as 'gratification other than legal remuneration' <p>What it was</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No specific provision, except as abetment <p><i>It could empower the public to refuse to give a bribe but seven-day limit may not be enough. As to what happens if citizen's report of coercion is not registered by the police is unclear</i></p>	 <p>Pre-investigation approval What is new</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Police officer cannot begin probe without prior approval of relevant authority or govt (except when caught red-handed) <p>What it was</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No such provision in the Act, but a rule similar to it was struck down by Supreme Court <p><i>Protection formerly available to officials of rank of joint secretary and above (before SC struck it down) is extended to all public servants</i></p>	 <p>Sanction for prosecution What is new</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sanction needed for prosecuting former officials for offences done while in office ▪ Centre may notify guidelines for sanction ▪ Decision on request for sanction within 3 months, which may be extended by a month" <p>What it was</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sanction was required under PCA for serving officers only <p><i>Sanction for IPC offences covered both serving and retired officers. Guidelines and time-limit may help make sanction process easier</i></p>	 <p>Criminal misconduct What is new</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only be two forms of criminal misconduct. ▪ Misappropriation of property entrusted to public servant ▪ Intentionally enriching oneself illicitly <p>What it was</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There were five kinds: omitted ones are taking bribe habitually, getting anything free or at a concession, obtaining pecuniary advantage for oneself or for another without public interest <p><i>This is to protect public servants from being wrongly prosecuted for official decisions. Earlier it was a crime to "obtain advantage to a private party without public interest"</i></p>	 <p>Forfeiture of property What is new</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section introduced for Special Court under this Act to attach and confiscate property <p>What it was</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This was not done under the Prevention of Corruption Act, but under a 1944 ordinance through civil courts <p><i>This helps avoid a fresh procedure to confiscate property obtained through corruption, enables court conducting trial to do so itself</i></p>
---	--	---	---	---

- It modifies definitions and penalties for offences related to taking bribe, being habitual offender and abetting offence. It also introduces powers and procedures for attachment and forfeiture of property of public servants accused of corruption.

Issues related to the Amendment:

- The amendments were the introduction of Section 17 A (1) by which prior permission for investigation of corruption offences was required from the government and the removal of Section 13 (1) (d) (ii) (criminal misconduct) from the Act. The latter provision had earlier made it an offence for a public servant to abuse his position to give pecuniary or other advantage to a third party and this provision of ‘criminal misconduct’ was used in most prosecutions of public servants under the Act in cases where there might not be a charge of directly accepting bribes.
- Seeking sanction before commencement of investigation in a corruption case not only takes away the element of secrecy and surprise but introduces a period of delay during which vital evidence can be manipulated or destroyed.
- The provision to seek prior permission can become a cause for corruption as it introduces discretion at the crucial stage of the investigation.

TOPIC: GS II, ASPECTS OF GOVERNANCE

6. Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

The Opposition MPs have recently proposed an amendment to remove specific countries and religions from the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016.

Details of the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016 and the proposal:

- The Bill, introduced in the Lok Sabha in July 2016, seeks to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955 to provide citizenship to illegal migrants, from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, who are of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian extraction.
- It doesn't have a provision for Muslim sects like Shias and Ahmediyas who also face persecution in Pakistan.
- It also seeks to reduce the requirement of 11 years of continuous stay in the country to six years to obtain citizenship by naturalization
- According to the Citizenship Act, 1955, an illegal immigrant is one who enters India without a valid passport or with forged documents. Or, a person who stays beyond the visa permit.

- The proposal seeks to make it religion and country neutral. No specific religion or country should be named. Instead of that the Bill should say that any person who leaves his country due to religious, linguistic and ethnic discrimination should be eligible for Indian citizenship.

TOPIC: GS II, INTERSTATE DISPUTE REDRESSAL MECHANISM

7. Interstate disputes on various projects

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

- The Central Water Commission (CWC) has approved the Mekedatu multipurpose project across the Cauvery that envisages supplying drinking water to come of the districts of the state besides generation of power.
- The Supreme Court on has recently ordered the centre to hold a public hearing with the people affected by the Polavaram dam project in Odisha and Chhattisgarh.



What is Mekedatu dispute?

- Karnataka intends to build a reservoir across river Cauvery near Mekedatu.
- It intends to use the water for a hydro power station and supply drinking water to Bengaluru city.
- In February 2017, the state decided to implement the project that involves building of a balancing reservoir across the Cauvery near Kanakapura in Ramanagaram district.
- It ran into a controversy after Tamil Nadu opposed it on the grounds that it violated the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal award.

Objection of Tamil Nadu:

- Karnataka had not sought prior permission for the project.

- The project would affect the flow of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu.
- It will result in impounding of the flows in the intermediate catchment below the Krishnaraja Sagar and Kabini reservoirs, and Billigundulu in the common border of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

Arguments of Karnataka:

- Reservoir is only for storing water meant to generate electricity and provide drinking water to Bengaluru as well as its neighbouring areas.

The Central Water Commission (CWC):

- CWC is India's apex technical organization in field of water resources functioning under Union Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation.
- It is mandated for initiating, coordinating in consultation of State Governments, schemes for control, utilization and conservation of water resources throughout the country. These schemes are meant for purpose of flood control, irrigation, navigation, drinking water supply and water power development.
- It is headed by a Chairman, with the status of Ex-Officio Secretary to the Government of India.

Polavaram Project and its advantages:

- It is a multipurpose irrigation project across Godavari River in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh with its reservoirs spreading across states of Chhattisgarh and Orissa as well. It is expected to be completed by 2019.
- It has status of a national project thus its implementation is monitored by the Central Water Commission.
- Its aim is to develop irrigation, drinking water facilities and hydropower to regions of East Godavari, Vishakhapatnam, Krishna and West Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh.
- It seeks to transfer surplus waters from Godavari basin to Krishna river basin that is a water deficit which will address the challenges of flooding and droughts witnessed in the respective basins.
- It will facilitate irrigation in the water-scarce regions of Andhra Pradesh such as Rayalseema which will reduce rain dependence of agriculture and help in addressing agrarian distress.
- It will also help in achieving the target of doubling farm incomes.

Issues related to the project:

- Environmental clearance for the Polavaram dam is based on a 2005 environmental impact assessment but Central Water Commission (CWC)

changed its flood situation estimate in 2006 which has not been incorporated in the design. Thus it requires further environmental clearance.

- The project will submerge several villages of Chhattisgarh and Odisha.
- There have been no assessments to gauge the maximum flood level that would impact the embankments.
- The forest clearance to the Polavaram project was given on the condition that Andhra Pradesh will construct embankments to avoid submergence which will be diverted for the projects. However, there has been no attempt to assess the forestland that will be diverted.

What is National Projects?

Government of India has approved a scheme of National Projects to be implemented during XI Plan with a view to expedite completion of identified National Projects for the benefit of the people. Such projects will be provided financial assistance by the Government of India in the form of Central grant which will be 90% of the estimated cost of such projects for their completion in a time bound manner.

II. SOCIAL JUSTICE

TOPIC: GS II, HEALTH

8. Private Insurance in Health Sector

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

Government has recently launched Ayushman Bharat Yojna providing yearly healthcare coverage of Rs 5 Lakh per family. Although it is a welcome step however the model that the government has adopted of using insurance companies is a point of concern.

What is the matter of concern?

- It is not financially sensible to insure with an insurance company because administrative overheads and profit margins of insurance companies are included in insurance premium costs which are often very high. For instance last year, insurance companies made massive profit of 85% on crop insurance premium under the PMFBY. For instance Aarogyasri scheme introduced in undivided Andhra Pradesh showed that the bid by insurance companies on such health schemes included a 20% margin for administrative expense and profit which is massive.
- Governments have to pay hefty sums in premium to insurance companies

- Insurance companies in public welfare services are using profit oriented neo liberal approach in welfare policies which is not good for the country like India.
- Currently India is trying to promote more foreign direct investment and private sector participation in insurance. If the companies involved in the process are restricted to the public sector, government funds would only be going from one pocket to another.
- There are also issues in finding reinsurers for government insurance schemes. This is the problem being faced by the government in the Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana because of high claims.

Way forward:

- No insurance company has the kind of financial resources the Centre and the States have, thus the government must consider bearing the risk by themselves known as the “trust mode” instead of using insurance companies as risk-bearers and intermediaries. In case of the trust model, the government sets up a trust to perform the role of an insurance company and the government fixes the price, hence there is no price discovery whereas in the insurance model, the state has to accept the bid provided by the companies.
- The study also found the claim-to-premium ratio and customer satisfaction to be better in the trust mode than the insurance mode. It would also prevent exorbitant profits accruing to insurance companies in good cropping seasons as in 2017-18.
- Third party administrator (TPAs) which only insures certain aspects should also be considered instead of full coverage. By avoiding insurance companies and using TPAs instead, governments can save about 15% per year.

TOPIC: GS II, HEALTH

9. WHO Report on Malaria

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

World Malaria report 2018 has been recently launched by the World Health Organisation with only India among the 11 highest-burden countries reporting progress in reducing malaria cases when compared to 2016 (a Protozoal disease).

Details of the report:

- Only India has progressed among the 11 highest-burden countries in reducing its disease burden, registering a 24 percent decrease in 2017 compared to 2016.

- India, no longer the top three countries with the highest malaria burdens, however, 1.25 billion Indians remain at risk of malaria>
- Malaria is mainly concentrated in the states of Orissa, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Tripura because of the inaccessible terrain areas as they get cut off post monsoon and due to presence of mosquito that transmit malaria in the difficult terrain.
- Global technical strategy (2016-30) announced by WHO and adopted by World Health Assembly in May 2015 call for malaria elimination by 2030.
- According to the report, India’s record offers great promise in the quest to cut the number of new cases and deaths globally by at least 40% by 2020, and to end the epidemic by 2030.
- Remarkable change has been noticed in Odisha which undertook, large-scale distribution of insecticide-treated bednets, together with strategies for timely medical intervention which resulted in a sharp drop in the number of cases.

Initiatives taken by the Government to eliminate Malaria:

- The National Framework for Malaria Elimination (NFME) 2016-2030 document launched in 2016 lays out the vision, mission, broad principles and practices to achieve the target of malaria elimination by 2030 synchronising with the Global Technical Strategy (GTS) for Malaria 2016-2030 of World Health Organisation (WHO).
- As per drafted National Strategic Plan for malaria elimination (2017-2020) the country has been stratified based on the malaria burden into four categories – Category 0 to Category 3 and based on this, the following interventions have been taken:
 1. Early diagnosis and complete treatment.
 2. Case based surveillance and rapid response.
 3. Integrated Vector Management.
 4. Long Lasting Insecticidal Nets (LLINs)/ Insecticide-treated Nets (ITNs).
 5. Larval Source Management (LSM)..
 6. Monitoring & Evaluation.
 7. Behavior Change Communication (BCC) and Community Mobilization.
 8. Programme Planning and management.

What is the Current issue?

- Many patients in India are becoming resistant to combination therapy targeted towards most dangerous type of Malaria which causes

debilitating cerebral malaria and leads to a high number of deaths.

Way forward:

- Eliminating malaria requires an integrated approach which should involve Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and West Bengal, which have a higher burden of the disease.
- Odisha's experience with using public health education as a tool and reaching out to remote populations with advice needs to be replicated.
- Given that emerging resistance to treatment has been reported in Myanmar, among other countries in this belt, there is a need for a coordinated approach to rid southern Asia of malaria so that the diseases does not get imported in the country.

III. ECONOMY

TOPIC: GS III, INCLUSIVE GROWTH AND ISSUES ARISING FROM IT

10. Gender wage gap highest in India

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

According to Global Wage Report 2018-19 published by International Labour Organization (ILO), women are paid most unequally in India, compared to men, when it comes to hourly wages for labour. This gap in wages, known as gender wage gap is the highest among 73 countries studied in the report. The findings are based on data from 136 countries.

Highlights of the report:

- On average, women are paid 34% less than men in India. Globally, on average, hourly wages of women are 16% less than those of men.
- Women are paid higher hourly wages than men in Bangladesh. Gender wage gap highest in India,
- The gender wage gap has remained unchanged at 20% from 2016 to 2017. But in 2017, gender gap was accompanied by near-stagnation in wages. Real wage growth was lowest since 2008, the year of the financial crisis. In real terms (adjusted for price inflation), global wage growth declined to 1.8% in 2017, from 2.4% in 2016.
- In advanced economies (G20), real wage growth declined from 0.9 per cent in 2016 to 0.4 per cent in 2017, meaning near stagnation. By contrast, in emerging economies and developing G20 countries, real wage growth dipped marginally from 4.9 per cent in 2016 and 4.3 per cent in 2017.
- Inequality is higher in monthly wages, with a gap of 22 per cent.

- In most countries, women and men differ significantly in respect of working time – specifically, that part-time work is more prevalent among women than among men.

International Labour Organization (ILO):

- ILO is United Nations agency dealing with labour issues, particularly international labour standards, social protection, and work opportunities for all.
- It was established in 1919 as an agency of the League of Nations.
- It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- India is a founder member of the ILO. At present, it has 187 members.
- The principal means of action in the ILO is the setting up of International standards in the form of Conventions, Recommendations and Protocol.
- So far, India has ratified 45 Conventions, out of which 42 are in force. Out of these 4 are Core or Fundamental or Conventions.

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

11. Inclusion of Quadricycles as Non Transport Vehicles

Sources: PIB, Livemint

Why in news:

The ministry of road transport and highways, in a notification on 20 November, has approved the sale of quadricycles for personal use.

- Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has notified the insertion of the item 'Quadricycle' as a 'non transport' vehicle under the Motor Vehicles Act 1988.
- Quadricycles were only allowed for transport usage under the Act, but now has been made usable for non transport also.
- A Quadricycle is a vehicle of the size of a 3-wheeler but with 4 tyres and fully covered like a car. It has an engine like that of a 3-wheeler. This makes it a cheap and safe mode of transport for last mile connectivity.

Significance of this move:

- The idea is to give another mobility option, especially to the middle class who want to upgrade from two-wheelers.
- Besides, a person cannot carry family members in a three-wheeler, therefore, quadricycles are being allowed in the private category. The move will

help them to upgrade to four-wheelers and move around with family.

Key points:

- Quadricycles will not be allowed for transporting cargo or luggage.
- Bajaj Auto Ltd's Qute is the first locally produced quadricycle.
- Others such as Tata Motors Ltd and Mahindra and Mahindra Ltd are also expected to launch similar products over the next couple of years.

Impact on the auto- industry:

- Quadricycles will pose a serious challenge to entry level cars. With the centre giving a go-ahead on the sale of quadricycles for personal use, top auto makers will have to revamp their strategy on entry-level cars, given quadricycles are expected to be far cheaper.

Concerns:

- While the government is trying to improve the safety standards of vehicles for Indian roads, quadricycles may not even meet the basic safety norms. Quadricycles should have been restricted only for commercial purposes since they don't meet the emission and safety norms of passenger cars. The regulators have been lenient and have diluted the norms for vehicles in this segment.

Background:

- Earlier this year, the Indian Government had approved of the Quadricycle as a vehicle category. Similar to all other vehicles sold in India even the Quadricycle vehicles will have to undergo a rigorous crash test and will have to meet the Bharat New Vehicle Safety Assessment Program (BNVSAP) safety norms and also the BS-VI emission norms.
- The government has also approved full electric or hybrid models of Quadricycle vehicles but even those models cannot skip the stringent crash test norms.

TOPIC: GS III, ECONOMY

12. Extension of norms for mandatory packaging in Jute Materials

Source: PIB

Why in news:

Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has approved to expand the scope of mandatory packaging norms under Jute Packaging Material (JPM) Act, 1987.

- CCEA approved that 100% of the food grains and 20% of sugar shall be mandatorily packed in diversified jute bags.

- Initially 10% of indents of jute bags for packing foodgrains will be placed through reverse auction on GEM portal. This will gradually help to usher in a regime of price discovery.

Impact:

- The decision will give a fillip to development of jute sector and impetus to the diversification of the jute industry.
- It will increase quality and productivity of raw jute and also boost and sustain demand for jute product.
- It will benefit farmers and workers located in Eastern and North Eastern regions of country particularly in the states of West Bengal, Bihar, Odisha, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Meghalaya and Tripura.

Jute Sector:

- Jute is one of the important natural fibers after cotton in terms of cultivation and usage. Its cultivation is dependent on climate, season, and soil. Almost 85% of world's jute cultivation is concentrated in the Ganges Delta. India is largest producer or cultivator of jute in the world (around 60%) followed by Bangladesh and China. Top jute producing states are West Bengal, Bihar, Assam and Odisha.
- This sector in India is predominantly dependent on Government which purchases jute products more than Rs. 6,500 crore every year. Government has been making concerted efforts for the development of jute sector considering that nearly 3.7 lakh workers and approximately 40 lakh farmers are dependent for their livelihood on jute sectors.

IV. ENVIRONMENT

TOPIC: GS III, CONSERVATION

13. Andaman & Nicobar Islands: home to a tenth of India's fauna species

Source: The Hindu

Why the news:

A recent publication by the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) titled Faunal Diversity of Biogeographic Zones: Islands of India has for the first time come up with a database of all faunal species found on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, putting the number at 11,009.

Key points:

- The documentation proves that the islands, comprising only 0.25% of India's geographical area, are home to more than 10% of the country's fauna species. It has 11,009 species.
- The publication cautions that tourism, illegal construction and mining are posing a threat to the

islands' biodiversity, which is already vulnerable to volatile climatic factors.

- Some of the species in A&N Islands are restricted to a very small area and thus more vulnerable to any anthropogenic threat. Any stress can have a long-lasting impact on the islands' biodiversity, devastating the population size of any endemic fauna, followed by extinction within a limited span of time.

Endemic species: The Narcondam hornbill, its habitat restricted to a lone island; the Nicobar megapode, a bird that builds nests on the ground; the Nicobar treeshrew, a small mole-like mammal; the Long-tailed Nicobar macaque, and the Andaman day gecko, are among the 1,067 endemic faunal species found only on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and nowhere else.

Among birds, endemism is quite high, with 36 among 344 species of birds found only on the islands. Many of these bird species are placed in the IUCN Red List of threatened species under the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA).

Endemic reptiles: Eight species of amphibians and 23 species of reptiles are endemic to the islands, and thus are at high risk of being threatened.

Marine faunal diversity: Includes coral reefs and its associated fauna. In all, 555 species of scleractinian corals (hard or stony corals) are found in the island ecosystem, all which are placed under Schedule I of the WPA. Similarly, all species of gorgonian (sea fans) and calcareous sponge are listed under different schedules of the WPA.

Vulnerable species: Of the ten species of marine fauna found on the islands, the dugong/sea cow, and the Indo-Pacific humpback dolphin, are both classified as Vulnerable under the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) Red List of Threatened Species. Among the 46 terrestrial mammalian species found, three species have been categorised as Critically Endangered — Andaman shrew (*Crociodura andamanensis*), Jenkin's shrew (*C. jenkinsi*) and Nicobar shrew (*C. nicobarica*). Five species are listed as Endangered, nine species as Vulnerable, and one species as Near Threatened, according to the IUCN.

About Andaman & Nicobar Islands:

- The total area of the A&N Islands, which comprises of 572 islands, islets and rocky outcrops, is about 8,249 sq. km.
- The population of the islands, which includes six particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) — Great Andamanese, Onge, Jarawa, Sentinelese, Nicobarese and Shompens — is not more than 4 lakh.

- The number of tourists visiting the islands has crossed the number of people residing in them, with latest data showing 4.87 lakh tourists visiting the islands annually.

Concerns:

- In a recent development, the Government of India relaxed the Restricted Area Permit (RAP) norms for some foreign nationalities notified under the Foreigners (Restricted Areas) Order, 1963, to visit 29 of its inhabited islands, till December 31, 2022. This has triggered further concerns of increased anthropogenic pressures over the islands' ecosystem. Some of the islands removed from the RAP list have no habitation except PVTG like Sentinelese in case of North Sentinel Island.
- The development paradigm that is being pushed for this place at the macro level, such as tourism, construction and development of military, are not taking in account three factors — ecological fragility of the area (the endemism), geological volatility (earthquakes and tsunamis), and the impact they will have on local communities.

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

14. Scientists mull stratospheric barrier to curb global warming

Source: The Hindu

Why the news:

According to a study by U.S. Scientists, spraying sun-dimming chemicals high above the earth to slow global warming could be "remarkably inexpensive", costing about \$2.25 billion a year over a 15-year period.

- This geo-engineering technique known as stratospheric aerosol injection (SAI) could limit rising temperatures that are causing climate change.
- Total costs estimated to launch a hypothetical SAI effort 15 years from now would be \$3.5 billion and average annual operating costs would be about \$2.25 billion a year over 15 years.
- Discounting other methods of deployment because of cost and feasibility, the research assumes a special aircraft can be designed to fly at an altitude of about 20 km and carry a load of 25 tonnes.

What are Stratospheric Sulphur Aerosols?

Stratospheric sulfur aerosols are sulfur-rich particles which exist in the stratosphere region of the Earth's atmosphere. The layer of the atmosphere in which they

exist is known as the Junge layer, or simply the stratospheric aerosol layer.

These particles consist of a mixture of sulfuric acid and water. They are created naturally, such as by photochemical decomposition of sulfur-containing gases, e.g. carbonyl sulfide.

- Sulfur aerosols are common in the troposphere as a result of pollution with sulfur dioxide from burning coal, and from natural processes.
- Volcanoes are a major source of particles in the stratosphere as the force of the volcanic eruption propels sulfur-containing gases into the stratosphere.

What is Stratospheric Aerosol Injection (SAI)?

- Under SAI delivery of precursor sulfide gases such as sulfuric acid, hydrogen sulfide (H₂S) or sulfur dioxide (SO₂) are sprayed by artillery, aircraft and balloons.
- It would involve the use of huge hoses, cannons or specially designed aircraft to spray large quantities of sulphate particles into the upper layer of the atmosphere to act as a reflective barrier against sunlight.

Benefits of the SAI:

- Mimics a natural process. It is technologically feasible. The method is economically feasible and efficient.

Significance:

- This proposed method could counter most climatic changes, take effect rapidly, have very low direct implementation costs, and be reversible in its direct climatic effects.

Possible risks:

- SAI could cause droughts or extreme weather in other parts of the world.
- Harm crop yields
- Potential public health and governance issues.
- Tropospheric Ozone depletion.
- Whitening of the sky.
- Tropopause warming and the humidification of the stratosphere.
- Stratospheric temperature rise and circulation change.
- It also does not address the issue of rising carbon dioxide emissions, the main greenhouse gas blamed for global warming.

**TOPIC: GS II, GOVERNMENT
POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS FOR
DEVELOPMENT IN VARIOUS SECTORS
AND ISSUES ARISING OUT OF THEIR
DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION**

15. Atmosphere & Climate Research- Modelling Observing Systems & Services (ACROSS) scheme

Source: PIB

Why in news:

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved continuation of the nine sub-schemes of the umbrella scheme "Atmosphere & Climate Research-Modelling Observing Systems & Services (ACROSS)" during 2017-2020.

- It will be implemented by the Ministry of Earth Sciences through its institutes namely India Meteorological Department (IMD), Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), National Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasting (NCMRWF), and Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Service(INCOIS).

Background:

- The Ministry of Earth Sciences has a mandate to carry out research and development activities to develop and improve capability to forecast weather, climate and natural hazard related phenomena. Towards this direction, MoES has taken several initiatives to formulate specific schemes like weather and climate modelling, monsoon-research, climate change science & climate services etc.
- These schemes involve multi-institutes wherein each unit has a designated role for accomplishing the aforesaid tasks. As a result, all these schemes with specific objectives and budget are implemented in an integrated manner and are put together under the umbrella scheme "ACROSS".

About ACROSS Scheme:

- ACROSS scheme pertains to the atmospheric science programs of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).
- It addresses different aspects of weather and climate services, which includes warnings for cyclone, storm surges, heat waves, thunderstorms etc.
- Each of these aspects is incorporated as nine sub-schemes under the umbrella scheme "ACROSS" and is implemented in an integrated.
- The ACROSS scheme consists of nine sub-programmes which are multi disciplinary and multi

institutional in nature and will be implemented in an integrated manner.

- As the objective of the ACROSS scheme is to provide a reliable weather and climate forecast for betterment of society, the scheme will aim at improving skill of weather and climate forecast through sustained observations, intensive R & D.

Impact of the Scheme:

- The scheme will provide improved weather, climate and ocean forecast and services, thereby ensuring transfer of commensurate benefits to the various services.
- It will also provide a sizable number of scientific and technical staff along with requisite administrative support, thereby generating employment.
- To ensure last-mile connectivity of the weather based services to the end -user, a large number of agencies like the Krishi Vigyana Kendras of ICAR, Universities and local municipalities are roped in thus generating employment opportunities to many people.

TOPIC: GS III, ENVIRONMENT

16. World Fisheries Day

Source: India Today

Why in news:

World Fisheries Day is celebrated on November 21st every year to highlight the importance of healthy oceans ecosystems and to ensure sustainable stocks of fisheries in the world.

- Fisher folks also demonstrate the importance of maintaining the fisheries of the world along with highlighting the problems like overfishing and mechanization. The day also explores moves towards finding solutions to the increasingly inter-connected problems that world is facing to follow the sustainable model.

Fisheries in India:

- Fisheries is an important sector in India that provides employment to millions of people apart from contributing to the food security of the country.
- India has over 8,000 km of coastline, and an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of over 2 million sq km, and extensive freshwater resources. Thus, fisheries play a vital role in the economy of the country with the practice contributing about 1.07 per cent to the GDP (Gross Domestic Product).
- Fisheries in India makes up to 5.3 per cent to agriculture and allied activities.

Inland fisheries:

Inland fisheries is also a vital part of fisheries in India. India's freshwater resources consist of:

- Rivers and canals (197,024 km).
- Reservoirs (3.15 million hectares).
- Ponds and tanks (235 million hectares).
- Oxbow lakes and derelict waters (1.3 million hectares).
- Brackish waters (1.24 million hectares) and estuaries (0.29 million hectares).

The inland capture fish production has increased from 192,000 tonnes in 1950 to 781,846 tonnes in 2007.

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

17. Climate Vulnerable Forum

Source: Times of India

Why in news:

Climate Vulnerable Forum meeting is being held in Marshall Islands. This is the first entirely online Heads of Government level intergovernmental meeting.

- Leaders at the Climate Vulnerable Forum have called on world's governments to raise the ambition of their climate targets by 2020 in order to save vulnerable nations threatened by warming beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius.

About Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF):

- The Climate Vulnerable Forum is an international cooperation group of developing countries tackling global climate change.
- The Climate Vulnerable Forum was created in 2009 at the initiative of the Maldives together with 10 other founding member states from different regions who gathered to address a common threat. Today, 48 developing countries are members of the CVF, representing a significant proportion of those nations most vulnerable to global climate change.
- The CVF was founded before the 2009 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, which sought to increase awareness of countries considered vulnerable.
- United Nations agencies collaborate in implementing activities linked to the CVF with the UNDP, the lead organization supporting the forum's work.
- The CVF was formed to increase the accountability of industrialized nations for the consequences of global climate change.

- Afghanistan, Nepal and Bhutan are among its members, whereas India is one of the observer states.

TOPIC: GS III, CONSERVATION

18. Hog deer

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

Indian scientists have discovered in India an endangered sub-species of hog deer (*Axis porcinus annamiticus*) in India. It was earlier believed to be confined to the eastern part of central Thailand.

Key points:

- Researchers reported the presence of a small population of hog deer in Keibul Lamjao National Park (KLNP), Manipur. The population genetically resembles *A. p. annamiticus*.
- The study indicates that the western limit of hog deer is Manipur; not central Thailand as believed so far.

Significance:

- Since hog deer is losing habitat in other countries, the genetically distinct and evolutionarily significant population found in KLNP— considered a biodiversity hotspot on the India-Myanmar border—is significant for conservation.

About Hog Deer:

- The hog deer or Pada is an endangered species in the IUCN Red List and is protected under Schedule I of the Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.
- The species has lost ground in most of its distribution range. A small and isolated population of under 250 was reported from Cambodia. However, it was widely distributed throughout the Southeast Asian countries at the beginning of the 20th century.
- Two sub-species of hog deer have been reported from its range. The western race is distributed from Pakistan and the terai grasslands (along the Himalayan foothills, from Punjab to Arunachal Pradesh), while the eastern race of hog deer is found in Thailand, Indo-China, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

TOPIC: GS I, IMPORTANT GEOPHYSICAL PHENOMENA SUCH AS EARTHQUAKES, TSUNAMI, VOLCANIC ACTIVITY, CYCLONE ETC.

19. Heat Wave

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

The Lancet Countdown 2018 report has recommended that the Indian policy makers must take a series of

initiatives to mitigate the increased risks to health, and the loss of labour hours due to a surge in exposure to heatwave events in the country over the 2012 to 2016 period.

Key points:

- From 2014-2017, the average length of heatwaves in India ranged from 3-4 days compared to the global average of 0.8-1.8 days, and Indians were exposed to almost 60 million heatwave exposure events in 2016, a jump of about 40 million from 2012.
- A recent report has placed India amongst the countries who most experience high social and economic costs from climate change. Overall, across sectors India lost almost 75,000 million hours of labour in 2017, from about 43,000 million hours in 2000.
- The agriculture sector was more vulnerable compared to the industrial and service sectors because workers there were more likely to be exposed to heat.
- The India Meteorological Department had reported that from 1901 to 2007, there was an increase of more than 0.5°C in mean temperature, with considerable geographic variation, and climate forecasts by research groups project a 2.2-5.5°C rise in temperatures in northern, central and western India by the end of the 21st century.

Important recommendations of the report:

- Identify “heat hot-spots” through appropriate tracking of meteorological data.
- Promote “timely development and implementation of local Heat Action Plans with strategic inter-agency co-ordination and a response which targets the most vulnerable groups.”
- Review existing occupational health standards, labour laws and sectoral regulations for worker safety in relation to climatic conditions.

Concerns:

- The findings are significant for India as agriculture makes up 18% of the country’s GDP and employs almost half the population.
- A recent World Bank report on South Asia’s hotspots predicted a 2.8% erosion of the country’s GDP by 2050, accompanied by a fall in living standards due to changes in temperature, rainfall and precipitation patterns.
- If the average global temperature rose by more than one degree Celsius from the present, India could “annually” expect conditions like the 2015 heat wave that killed at least 2,000, according to the ‘Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5°C,’

commissioned by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), recently.

- Heatwaves are associated with increased rates of heat stress and heat stroke, worsening heart failure and acute kidney injury from dehydration. Children, the elderly and those with pre-existing morbidities are particularly vulnerable.

What is a Heat Wave?

- Heat wave is considered if maximum temperature of a station reaches at least 40°C or more for Plains, 37°C or more for coastal stations and at least 30°C or more for Hilly regions.

Following criteria are used to declare heat wave:

1. Based on Departure from Normal:

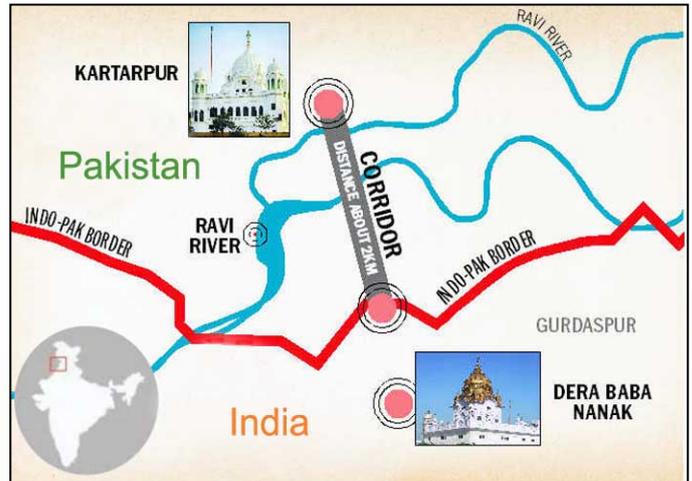
- Heat Wave: Departure from normal is 4.5°C to 6.4°C.
- Severe Heat Wave: Departure from normal is >6.4°C.

2. Based on Actual Maximum Temperature (for plains only):

- Heat Wave: When actual maximum temperature ≥ 45°C.
- Severe Heat Wave: When actual maximum temperature ≥47°C.

To declare heat wave, the above criteria should be met at least in 2 stations in a Meteorological sub-division for at least two consecutive days and it will be declared on the second day.

- Indian Sikhs gather in large numbers for darshan from the Indian side, and binoculars are installed at Gurdwara Dera Baba Nanak on Indian side.
- Sikh jathas from India travel to Pakistan on four occasions every year for Baisakhi, the martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev, the death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and the birthday of Guru Nanak Dev.



Advantages:

- Means to enhance confidence-building measure.
- It can open the door for pilgrimage by other communities residing on both the sides of the border like Sharda Peeth in the Neelum Valley in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir by Kashmiri Pandits, dargah of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer by Sufis in Pakistan.

V. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

TOPIC: GS II, INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

20. Kartarpur corridor

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

India and Pakistan have announced plans of operationalizing a visa-free 4-km-long corridor between Dera Baba Nanak in Indian Punjab and Kartarpur Sahib in Pakistan’s Punjab for Sikh pilgrims to mark the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev in November 2019.

About Kartarpur Gurdwara:

- The gurdwara in Kartarpur stands on the bank of the Ravi.
- It was here that Guru Nanak assembled a Sikh community and lived for 18 years until his death in 1539.
- It is visible from the Indian side.

TOPIC: GS II, INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

21. India- Vietnam Relations

Source: The Hindu

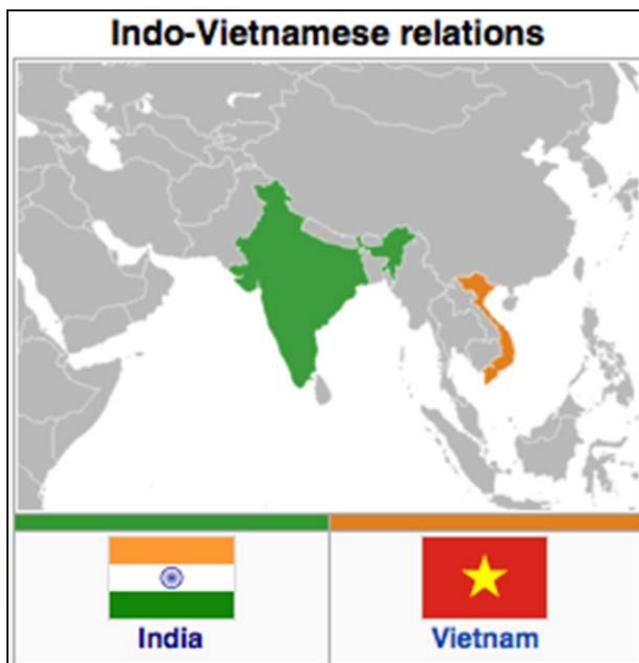
Why in news:

The President of India recently visited Hanoi, Vietnam as part of his two-nation state visit to Vietnam and addressed the Vietnam-India Business Forum.

Vietnam’s Importance for India:

- Vietnam is an important element of India’s Act East Policy, which aims to re-invigorate its historical as well as strategic ties with countries in Southeast and East Asia. Vietnam is a very important trading partner for India within ASEAN, and India is now among the 10 largest trading partners of Vietnam.
- Vietnam is important for India from the connectivity angle. With the election of a civilian government in Myanmar, there are ample opportunities for closer connectivity between India and Vietnam via Myanmar and existing transit routes in Cambodia and Laos.

- The trilateral India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway will allow Indian goods to reach Southeast Asia with ease and in future, this trilateral highway could link up with already existing roads like the one linking Thailand with the Vietnamese port of Da Nang.
- India's growing economy needs energy resources and Vietnam has rich hydrocarbon reserves. India's state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has been searching for oil off Vietnam.
- Vietnam-India relationship presents prospects for engagement in financial services, IT and the digital economy, hydrocarbons, defence, renewable energy, mining, healthcare, tourism and civil aviation, among other sectors.
- Vietnam is important for India for ensuring a 'rules based order in the Indo-Pacific' which is India's own concerns over troubled maritime spaces.



India's Importance for Vietnam

- For Vietnam, India could be a bulwark against the dominance of any single country in the region. It has a long-standing territorial dispute with China in the South China Sea.
- Vietnam is entering a new phase in its foreign policy in the light of complete lifting of the U.S. embargo on the sale of lethal weapons to Vietnam. In the past, India has additionally conducted capacity-building programs for Vietnamese defense personnel.
- There are numerous opportunities to increase trade between the two countries. In 2014, total bilateral trade stood at \$5.6 billion and the two countries are expecting to take it to \$15 billion by 2020.

- Indian companies can infuse much needed capital and technology into the Vietnamese to bring it to par with its East Asian counterparts.
- There is the strong cultural aspect to the relationship between the two country. Vietnam has a large number of Buddhists and many of them come to visit Buddhist holy shrines in India.

Issues between the two countries:

- Vietnam is against the militarization of the Indo Pacific that is why it continuously opposes QUAD in the region.
- Vietnam wants a balanced relation with both India and China.

Way forward:

- Vietnam is a part of sub-regionalism in ASEAN and India should focus on this sub-regional priority to pursue its foreign policy. Cambodia-Laos-Vietnam growth triangle is a part of this sub-regional cooperation.
- Both the countries can jointly explore the potential for enhancing capacity building and providing technical assistance and training for greater engagement in ASEAN.
- Both India and Vietnam possess the capacity to find compatibility in areas promoting defence cooperation and infrastructure simultaneously.
- India must convince Vietnam about the real goal of Quad which is to ensure a rule based order in the region.

TOPIC: GS II, INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

22. A Perspective on China's Belt and Road Initiative

Source: The Hindu

About Belt and Road initiative:

- It is an ambitious programme to connect Asia with Africa and Europe via land and maritime networks along six corridors with the aim of improving regional integration, increasing trade and stimulating economic growth.
- It is building upon the inclusive project envisaged by the World bank which wanted to curb inequalities in the world by spreading democracy and infrastructural development led by westt. However, this dream is being realized by a non-Western and non-democratic superpower.

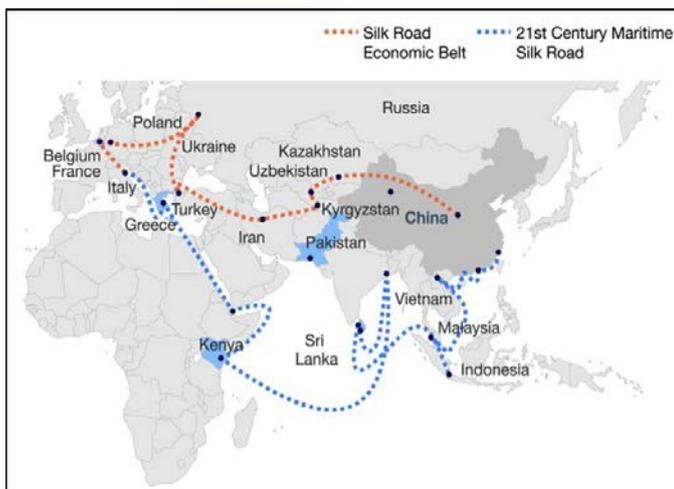
Is BRI really inclusive?

- It is an ambition to influence the world if not directly control it by making the rules on which it functions.

- For China, BRI is more than the six economic corridors of which the \$50 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is perhaps the most controversial violating India's sovereignty directly.
- The BRI is included in the Constitution of China.
- It is a political project and a Chinese project no matter the number of other partners joining the effort and participating to its funding.
- It is important to note that the BRI is being developed without any dedicated law. It is neither a comprehensive trade nor economic partnership.
- It is different from conventional trade agreements which seeks to eliminate market access barriers, harmonise regulations and impose preconditions for entry.
- Because of the above issues, BRI is nothing but a manifestation of Chinese aim of influencing every corner of the world.

About Digital Silk Road:

- It aims at greater digital connectivity and expanding China's digital footprint. It envisages "innovation action plans for e-commerce, digital economy, smart cities and science and technology parks.
- It was announced in 2015, and its name traces its origins to China's Silk Road, which is an ancient network of trade routes that connected East and West. It is a part of China's technology and trade strategies.
- Example- Baidu, Alibaba, UC browser, Tencent etc are rapidly growing in other countries to grow.
- The country has created policy frameworks – such as its cybersecurity framework and new data protection framework – to help drive its technology strategy.
- Chinese sponsored Asian infrastructure and investment Bank is also engaged in financing the BRI. In this way it is not challenging the Brettonwoods institutions rather its motive is different.



TOPIC: GS II, INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURING RELATIONS

23. India-China Relations

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

21st round of border talks has been recently held between India's National Security Advisor and Chinese foreign minister. It is believed that the talks presents an opportunity to take stock of the dos and don'ts related to the resolution of the boundary dispute.



Border issues between India and China:

- India-China border dispute covers 3,488-km-long Line of Actual Control.
- India-China border is divided into three sectors, viz. Western, Middle and Eastern. Boundary dispute in the Western Sector has been settled with the settlement of Aksai Chin between the two countries.
- Middle Sector is not a major source of dispute and it is the only sector where India and China have exchanged maps on which they broadly agree.
- The disputed boundary in the Eastern Sector of the India-China border is over the MacMahon Line. The Tawang tract claimed by China was taken over by India in 1951. China claims Arunachal Pradesh as part of southern Tibet.
- Since the early 1980s, both sides have held multiple rounds of talks to draw up a mutually acceptable LAC and resolve their border dispute.
- However China's policy of shifting the point of negotiation at will has been the source of the ongoing contention. Till 1959, it wanted adjustments in Aksai Chin and to accept the McMahon Line in the east in exchange for India accepting its claim on Aksai Chin. However, since 1985, China has been demanding Indian concessions in the east, specifically the cession of the Tawang tract.

- As it now controls Aksai Chin, it denies all dispute there, claiming that the problem relates to only approximately 2,000 km, not 4,000 km as per India's claims.
- Signing of the Border Peace and Tranquillity Agreement (BPTA) in 1993 is seen as first step towards resolving border dispute. Other confidence Building Measures (CBMs) agreements signed in 1996, 2005, 2012 and 2013.
- China has resolved all its continental land borders, except with India and Bhutan.

TOPIC: GS II, POLICIES OF OTHER COUNTRIES AND ITS IMPACT ON INDIA

24. Ukraine declares Martial Law

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

- Ukraine on Monday imposed martial law for 30 days in parts of the country most vulnerable areas to an attack from Russia in the wake of capturing of three Ukrainian vessels by Russia triggering a sharp escalation in tensions between the two countries.
- Martial law is a temporary rule by military authorities of a designated area in time of emergency when the civil authorities appears to be unable to function.



What are the causes?

- Russia and Ukraine have been at loggerheads since Russia seized Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 and backed an insurgency in the eastern Donbass region that has killed more than 10,000 people.
- The Republic of Crimea, officially part of Ukraine, lies on a peninsula stretching out from the south of Ukraine between the Black Sea and the Sea of Azov. It is separated from Russia to the east by the narrow Kerch Strait.
- Ukraine insists that the patrol of the Kerch Strait, where the vessels were impounded, was authorised under a bilateral agreement with Moscow.

- A new bridge over the strait that connects mainland Russia with Crimea has raised concerns about Moscow's greater control and influence in the region.



Impact:

- Since Ukraine is a part of NATO, the matter has the potential to bring other western ally of Ukraine particularly USA closer to the region which may exacerbate the situation.
- Eastern parts of the Ukraine which are under strain are the source of Ukrainian economy since major iron and steel industries are located there. So, the incident can affect the economy of the country.
- Russia will be further sidelined by the major European countries which will make it more dependent towards China.

TOPIC: GS II, BILATERAL AND MULTILATERAL GROUPINGS

25. India-Iran Relations (US factor)

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

India has received a temporary waiver from sanctions granted by the U.S. along with seven other countries importing oil from Iran which highlights the importance of economic factors in the India-U.S. strategic partnership. Moreover, it also throws light on the link between economics and strategy.

What does the waiver imply?

- Waiver, in addition to giving India a breathing, it also helps to maintain India-U.S. ties on a balance. However, US has stated that the waiver is intended to avoid shock due to resulting rise in global oil prices.
- Waiver also shows the cooperation between U.S. and India on India's oil and gas needs. It is in line with the Strategic Energy Partnership between India and the U.S. (April 2018) which views energy

cooperation as a centerpiece in the bilateral relationship. However it is aimed at opening India's markets for US'petroleum exports which can be viewed from increased oil exports from the U.S. to India since 2017.

- U.S. is India's main strategic partner. Also, American naval power is indispensable for preserving maritime freedom and security in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. Hence cooperation with US is the need of the hour for India.
- Realising the advantage of India developing Chabahar, the U.S. has also exempted India from certain sanctions so that it can make progress on the port. It shows that for pursuing its interest in the Indo pacific India is very important for USA and it has to take care of India's interest also.
- The sanctions relief for the port is motivated by a mix of politics and economics. US views Chabahar's utility in development and humanitarian relief work in Afghanistan.
- The U.S. is also aware that China could easily replace India if India is unable to maintain its foothold there and sanctions will cripple India's efforts to make progress on this project.



Importance of Iran for India:

- Friendly ties with a politically stable Iran undoubtedly suit India from security point of view as India's presence in Iran acts as a deterrent for Pakistan.
- India has had a bilateral trade deficit with Iran over many years. In 2017 it was \$8.5 billion.
- Iran is the only country which allows India to pay in Rupee for oil imports.
- On the security front, India's cooperation with Iran has to be seen against the broader context of its regional rivalries with Pakistan and China.
- Both countries share regional interests as they could build a strategic partnership focussing on Afghanistan, Central Asia and West Asia. Together with Russia and some other countries, they are signatories to the International North-South

Transport Corridor (INSTC) agreement, using Iran as the trade route to Russia and northern Europe. INSTC transit routes enable India to bypass a hostile Pakistan by exporting goods via the sea. It is due to this that India has been developing the Chabahar port in southern Iran in a strategic bid to connect to Central Asia through Iran and Afghanistan.

- Chabahar also provides war-torn Afghanistan a crucial link to Indian goods and Iranian oil.

Way forward:

- A stronger relationship with Iran would increase India's influence in West and Central Asia. That could help to counter China. And a friendly U.S. could then approach Iran on nuclear issues through India's good offices.
- However, India cannot support nuclear proliferation in Iran as a nuclear Iran would disrupt the balance of power across West and Central Asia, with serious consequences for India's economic and strategic interests.
- India has to maintain a balance with both USA as well as China because both are equally important for India.

VI. SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

TOPIC: GS III, ACHIEVEMENTS OF INDIANS IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY; INDIGENIZATION OF TECHNOLOGY AND DEVELOPING

26. PSLV-C43 successfully launches earth observation satellites HysIS and 30 Foreign Satellites

Source: PIB

Why the news:

The Indian Space Research Organization's (ISRO) Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C43) successfully launched 31 satellites from Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) in Sriharikota.

- HysIS (Hyper-Spectral Imaging Satellite) had the company of one micro and 29 nano-satellites from eight countries, including Australia (1), Canada (1), Columbia (1), Finland (1), Malaysia (1), Netherlands (1), Spain (1) and USA (23).
- Satellites from Australia, Columbia, Malaysia, and Spain were flown aboard PSLV for the first time.
- These foreign satellites launched are part of commercial arrangements between Antrix Corporation Limited and customers.

About HysIS:

- HysIS is an earth observation satellite built around ISRO's Mini Satellite 2 (IMS-2) bus weighing about 380 kg.
- The mission life of the satellite is five years.
- Its primary goal is to study the earth's surface in both the visible, near infrared and shortwave infrared regions of the electromagnetic spectrum.
- Data from the satellite will be used for various applications including agriculture, forestry, soil/geological environments, coastal zones and inland waters, etc.

About PSLV:

- Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) is the third generation launch vehicle of India. It is the first Indian launch vehicle to be equipped with liquid stages.
- It is a four stage launch vehicle.
- A large solid rocket motor forming the first stage,
- An earth storable liquid stage as the second stage,
- A high performance solid rocket motor as third stage, and
- A liquid stage with engines as fourth stage.
- The vehicle successfully launched two spacecraft – Chandrayaan-1 in 2008 and Mars Orbiter Spacecraft in 2013.

GS PAPER 1: IMPORTANT GEOPHYSICAL PHENOMENA SUCH AS EARTHQUAKES, TSUNAMI, VOLCANIC ACTIVITY, CYCLONE ETC.

27. RIMES terms Titli cyclone 'rarest of rare'

Source: The Hindu

Why the news:

The Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System (RIMES) for Africa and Asia has termed 'Titli', the severe cyclonic storm that devastated Odisha in October, as 'rarest cyclone'.

- Earlier, India Meteorological Department had called the formation of Titli as a 'rarest of rare' occurrence. The severe cyclone had changed its path after landfall.

Why 'rarest of rare'?

- More than 200 years of cyclone track history in the Odisha coast reveals that the Titli cyclone is the rarest of rare in terms of its characteristics such as recurvature after landfall and retaining its destructive potential after landfall and recurvature away from the coastal areas for more than two days.

Key points:

- The highest number of casualties occurred in a village called Baraghara in Gajapati district due to landslides. People did not evacuate, as the risk is unknown and also not expected. There was no pin-pointed forecast available what will happen where.
- Due to its rare features, forecast information lacked actionable early warning information such as no indication of occurrence of secondary hazards, including landslides far away from the coasts especially in interior districts of Odisha.
- The Odisha State Disaster Management Authority (OSDMA) faced challenges in anticipating and managing Titli's impact due to lack of impact-based actionable early warning information and prior experience not only in India but also elsewhere.

Way forward:

- The OSDMA, by learning the lessons from Titli cyclone, could evolve measures to minimise impacts in both coastal and non-coastal regions more effectively in future.
- The RIMES has recommended that a detailed risk assessment has to be carried out for Odisha to understand the risks in the light of the Titli devastation.

About RIMES:

- RIMES, is an inter-governmental body registered under the United Nations.
- It is owned and managed by 45 collaborating countries in Asia Pacific and Africa Region.
- The programme unit of the agency is located in Thailand.
- At present, India is chairing RIMES.
- RIMES evolved from the efforts of countries in Africa and Asia, in the aftermath of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, to establish a regional early warning system within a multi-hazard framework for the generation and communication of early warning information, and capacity building for preparedness and response to trans-boundary hazards.

TOPIC: GS III, DISASTER AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

28. Impact Based Forecasting Approach

Source: Times of India

Why in news:

India Meteorological Department (IMD) has developed new technology called 'Impact Based Forecasting Approach' to assess rise of water level in rivers and reservoirs by rain.

- It shows pre-event scenario will help state governments authorities to minutely monitor impact of rainfall and take real-time decisions.

Background:

- The heavy downpour had led to floods in Kerala and was result of climate change. State Government had blamed IMD for lapses in its part for wrong rain forecast. IMD had forecasted estimated 98.5 mm rain in the state between 9 and 15 August, 2018 but Kerala received was 352.2 mm of rainfall resulting in severe flooding.

Significance:

- Pre-event scenario will help state governments authorities to minutely monitor impact of rainfall and take real-time decisions. It will help to avoid disastrous situation similar to Kerala floods. It can generate scenario to help take decisions to release water or not from reservoirs after heavy downpour. It will be helpful for every state authority to take decision. This system can be run in pre-event scenario.

India Meteorological Department (IMD):

- It is national meteorological service of the country and chief government agency dealing in everything related to meteorology, seismology and associated subjects. It was formed in 1875. It functions under Ministry of Earth Sciences. It is headquartered in New Delhi.

VII. PRELIMS/MISCELLANEOUS

29. 'COPE INDIA 2019'

- It is a bilateral exercise between Indian Air Force (IAF) and US Air Force (USAF) conducted on and over Indian soil.
- The 2019 edition will be held in West Bengal.
- The first such exercise was conducted at IAF air force station in Gwalior from February 2004.

30. Pygmy False Catshark

A new species of a deep sea shark- the Pygmy false catshark, has been found in the northern Indian Ocean, the first such discovery in India since 2011 when the Mangalore houndshark was identified.

- The Pygmy false catshark is currently known only from deep waters (200-1000m depth)
- It is about 65cm long and dark brown in colour without any prominent pattern.
- The new species was found off the southwestern coast of India and north of Sri Lanka.
- Its scientific name is *Planonasmus indicus* – from 'planus' meaning flat and 'nasmus' meaning nose.

- The new species was first observed was on April 26, 2008, when it was caught in fishing nets in Kochi, Kerala.

31. Country's first Owl festival in Pune

- The Indian Owl Festival, the country's first owl fest, is being held at Pingori village in Purandar taluka of Pune.
- The two-day festival, organised by Ela Foundation, an NGO working towards nature education and conservation, will give information on owl conservation.
- It is a first-of-its-kind festival in the country that is being organised with the intention of creating awareness about owl as a bird and debunking numerous superstitions associated with it.
- Indian Owl is protected under the Wildlife (Protection) Act of India.
- Of the 262 species of owls that are found in the world, 75 feature in the red data book – meaning they are threatened. Major causes behind this are superstitions and habitat loss – both are man-made. They are "highly prized and in demand for black magic purposes".
- Owls eat rats, rodents, bandicoots, and mice. Most of the species that owls consume are harmful to agricultural croplands. So these birds are actually very beneficial to farmers.

32. Paisa – Portal for Affordable Credit & Interest Subvention Access

- A centralized electronic platform for processing interest subvention on bank loans to beneficiaries under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana – National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NULM) named "PAISA – Portal for Affordable Credit and Interest Subvention Access" has been recently launched.
- The web platform has been designed and developed by Allahabad Bank which is the Nodal bank.
- PAISA is an effort by the government to connect directly with the beneficiaries, ensuring that there is greater transparency and efficiency in delivery of services.
- All 35 states / UTs & all scheduled commercial banks, RRBs and Cooperative Banks are expected to be on board the PAISA portal the year end.

33. Drugs derived from Marijuana

- The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, the Indian Council for Medical Research and the Department of Biotechnology are together

promoting research in herbal drugs which involve deriving new drugs from marijuana.

- The effectiveness of the drug will be assessed in the treatment of diseases like breast cancer, sickle-cell anaemia etc.

About Marijuana:

- Marijuana (Cannabis) is a psychoactive drug from the Cannabis plant used for medical, recreational & religious purposes.
- Cannabis can be used by smoking, vaporization, within food, or as an extract.
- Cannabis has been used since ancient times in India, dating back to 2000 BCE and it has been also mentioned in the Vedas.
- There has been no rigorous scientific testing of the medicinal properties of cannabis due to restrictive laws in India. It has been allowed in USA.
- There is considerable evidence though, supporting its use in the treatment of chemotherapy, AIDS, wasting syndrome, glaucoma etc.
- It has been banned by India under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act-1985.

34. Odisha now has a lexicon for rare tribal languages

- Odisha government has come out with lexicons of 21 such languages to keep vanishing tribal languages in circulation. The bilingual tribal dictionaries will be used in multilingual education initiated by the State government at the elementary level in tribal-dominated districts.

Details of the dictionary:

- Odisha has the maximum number of Scheduled Tribe communities. It is home to 62 different tribal communities, including 13 particularly vulnerable tribal groups. These tribes speak 21 languages and 74 dialects. Of the 21 tribal languages, seven have their own scripts.
- Adoption of more widely spoken competitors, such as Odia, Hindi, English and dominant tribal languages, has hastened the disappearance of rare dialects.
- Advantages:
 1. It will help in enhancing proficiency in tribal languages.
 2. Preparation of the dictionaries is a step towards ensuring that they are preserved and promoted.

About Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs):

- A community will be called PVTGs if it fulfils one of the below criteria:

1. Dependent on hunting & gathering.
 2. Extremely low literacy.
 3. Population growth rate is zero or negative.
- Features: Physically isolated, Homogenous, Absence of written language, Low population, Absence of technology.
 - They were earlier called as Primitive Tribal Groups and were created as a sub-category within the Scheduled Tribes (STs) based on the Debhar Commission report.
 - There are communities with very low in development indices. So, a further classification under STs was needed to promote development among these communities.
 - At present there are 75 tribes listed in PVTGs. Among the 75 listed PVTG's the highest number are found in Odisha (13), followed by Andhra Pradesh (12).

35. Aadi Mahotsav

- The 4th edition of annual Aadi Mahotsav has been recently organized by Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

About Aadi Mahotsav:

- It is a national tribal festival to celebrate, cherish and promote the spirit of tribal craft, culture, cuisine and commerce.
- Theme for this year Aadi mahotsav is Theme: A Celebration of the Spirit of Tribal Culture, Craft, Cuisine and Commerce”.

36. HAUSLA-2018

- The National Festival for Children of Child Care Institutions (CCIs) Hausla 2018 has been recently organized by the Ministry of Women and Child Development (MWCD).
- The theme for the event is “Child Safety”.
- It is celebrated for:
 1. Providing the children a national platform for the children from CCIs across India to showcase their talent.
 2. Making them realize the hidden talent they possess
 3. Helping them to take it forward in their life.

37. Mission Raksha Gyan Shakti

- Defence ministry has recently launched ‘Mission Raksha Gyan Shakti.
- The event showcased salient inventions and innovations achieved by Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) and Ordnance

Factories (OFs) which have resulted in successful filing of Intellectual Property Right (IPR) applications.

38. IN - RN Exercise KONKAN-18

- The naval exercise Konkan 18 between India and United Kingdom has been recently started off Goa.

About KONKAN:

- The KONKAN series of exercises commenced in 2004, and since then has grown in scale.

- It is aimed at deriving mutual benefit from each others' experiences and is indicative of the continuing cooperation between the two countries.
- The naval cooperation is a tangible symbol of the commitment of both nations in ensuring a positive climate at sea for enhancing strategic stability and promoting economic prosperity.

Question:

1. Critically analyse the constitutional provisions which ensure independence of the Election commission of India. Suggest measures for making this body more empowered.
2. Discuss the causes which prevent the states from letting the Central Bureau of Investigation, the premier investigative agency of the country to investigate their cases. Critically analyse various committee recommendations for making this body more autonomous. Suggest measures for making it more empowered.
3. Explain the causes of overcrowding of undertrials in the Indian prisons. Discuss the recommendations of the Law commission recommendations in this context.
4. Discuss the issues revolving around Article 35A of the constitution by highlighting both the arguments in favour and against it.
5. Although the amendment in the prevention of corruption act is aimed at making the law more effective. However there are many concerns related to it. Explain in the light of the amendments and the concerns.
6. How far do you justify the inclusion of private sector in the government led insurance schemes in the country? Suggest measures to make these schemes more effective.
7. Indo Vietnam relation is cordial and strong not only in the context of cultural proximity but also from strategic perspective. Discuss. Highlight the bitter areas in their relation. Suggest measures India should adopt for enhancing its relation with Vietnam.
8. Chinese led Belt and Road initiative is more political and less economic in nature. Comment. Explain the concept of Digital Belt and Road initiative.
9. Explain briefly the major border issues between India and China.
10. Offering sanction waivers to India is not only a breather for India but also beneficial for USA. Discuss. Is this waiver permanent or temporary in nature?