I. POLITY & GOVERNANCE

TOPIC: GS II, GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INTERVENTION

1. India Post Payments Bank

Source: PIB

About IPPB:

- It can accept deposits of up to Rs.1 lakhs, provide remittance services, mobile payments, transfers, purchases and other banking services like net banking, debit cards and third-party fund transfers.

- Any account whose deposits exceed Rs.1 lakh would be automatically changed into post office savings account.

- The government has 100 per cent ownership of this bank and this will offer products and services through numerous channels such as counter services, micro ATMs, mobile banking app, messages and interactive voice response.

- At first it will have 650 branches and 3,250 access points in post offices throughout the country.

Services to be provided by IPPB are as follows::

- money transfer
- savings and current accounts
- bill and utility payments
- direct benefit transfers
- enterprise and merchant payments
- These services, are to be offered across multiple channels like counter services, micro-ATM, mobile banking app, SMS etc, using the bank's state-of-the-art technology platform.
- These services would be delivered by the postmen at the doorstep.

Role of the Postmen in IPPB:

- The 3 lakh 'dak sevaks' would be the key in providing financial services to every house and small enterprise in the villages of the country.

- A number of steps have been taken for the welfare of 'dak sevaks' like increase in their salary substantially.

- Dak Sevaks will be empowered with smart phones, digital devices for providing financial services.

Benefits:

- For achieving financial inclusion objectives rapidly,

- IPPB has been sought as an accessible and affordable bank for the common people.

- Banking services will conveniently reach the remotest corners of the country through India Post Payments Bank.

- IPPB will hence significantly augment the reach of the banking sector in India, thereby improving financial inclusion.

Challenges before IPPB:

- It is going to be a challenging task for IPPB to earn the profits required to survive itself as a business entity.

- As there are many limitations imposed by RBI on how payments banks can make use of their funds IPPB will have less flexibility to act independently.

- For earning revenue, it has decided to charge fees on money transfers and various other financial services while investing the customer deposits in safe government securities with the intention to earn interest.

- It is likely to face stiff competition from private companies, which are usually more adapting to business realities and comoparatively more customer-friendly in comparison to the government-owned large organisations.

- Lack of adequate infrastructure (both physical and social) among the rural population is an another challenge.

TOPIC: GS II, ASPECTS OF GOVERNANCE

2. The Law Commission of India on Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

The views regarding need of Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the country:

- UCC is neither necessary nor desirable at this stage and secularism cannot contradict the plurality prevalent in the country.

- Cultural diversity cannot be compromised to the

Multiple lessons

Apart from its suggestions on a Uniform Civil Code, the Law Commission's consultation paper also went into questions of marriage, divorce and confessions

MARRIAGE AGE
- The Law Commission suggested that 18 years be the minimum legal age for men and women to get married
- It said that insistence on recognising different ages of marriage between consenting adults must be abolished as "it contributes to the stereotype that wives must be younger than their husbands"

DIVORCE
- The consultation paper suggested that there is a need to recognise role of women in a household. It said a woman should get an equal part of the property gained after marriage in the event of divorce
- However, this principle does not automatically translate to an 'absolute' equal split of property after divorce
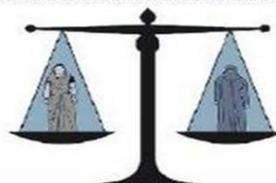
CONFESSIONS
- In its paper on 'Reform of Family Law', the panel did not favour a ban on church confessions. The NCW had last month recommended a ban on them
- The panel mooted the idea that confessions could also "eventually include nuns." This, the paper said, could be brought in through consensus building within communities

extent that our urge for uniformity itself becomes a reason for threat to the territorial integrity of the nation."

- A unified nation does not necessarily need to have uniformity.
- Efforts have to be made to reconcile our diversity with universal and indisputable arguments on human rights.
- Difference does not always imply discrimination in a robust democracy.
- Discriminatory practices within a religion should not hide behind the cloak of that faith to gain legitimacy.

Codification of personal laws:

- The commission has recommended the codification of all personal laws so that prejudices and stereotypes can be tested on the anvil of fundamental rights of the Constitution.
- It will enable the country to arrive at certain universal principles that prioritise equity rather than imposition of a Uniform Code, which would discourage many from using the law altogether.
- It suggested certain measures in marriage and divorce which should be uniformly accepted in the personal laws of all religions and amendments in personal laws to include fixing the marriageable age for boys and girls at 18 years so that people marry as equals, making adultery a ground for divorce for men and women and to simplify divorce procedure.

Polygamy as criminal offence:

- It suggested that nikahnamas should make it clear that polygamy is a criminal offence and this should apply to all communities not as a moral step to glorify monogamy but emanates highlighting the fact that only a man should not be permitted to have multiple wives which is unfair.

What is uniform civil code?

- By uniform civil code, it is meant that all sections of the society irrespective of their religion shall be treated equally according to a national civil code, which shall be applicable to all uniformly.
- They cover areas like- Marriage, divorce, maintenance, inheritance, adoption and succession of property. It is based on the premise that there is necessarily no connection between religion and personal law in a civilized society.
- Therefore, Uniform civil code is a proposal to replace the personal laws based on the scriptures and customs of each major religious community in India with a common set of governing laws for every citizen.

Uniform civil code and the constitution:

- During drafting of the constitution prominent leaders like Nehru, Ambedkar pushed for a uniform civil code. However they ended up proposing the uniform civil code into the directive principles of the state policy (article 44) mainly due to opposition from Muslim fundamentalists, lack of awareness among the masses and due to an umproper time for its imposition.
- "I personally do not understand why religion should be given this vast, expansive jurisdiction, so as to cover the whole of life and to prevent the legislature from encroaching upon that field"– Dr. B R Ambedkar during Constituent Assembly Debates.

Way Forward:

- The thrust of the Law Commission's report is founded on the idea that "the mere existence of difference does not imply discrimination, but is indicative of a robust democracy."
- The Law Commission's consultation paper on reform of family laws is a progressive document that avoids the advocacy of a uniform civil code merely for the sake of uniformity.
- While calling for a wider public debate on its views, the Law Commission has framed the issue in the most reasonable way possible when it says it has "dealt with laws that are discriminatory rather than providing a uniform civil code which is neither necessary nor desirable at this stage."
- A just code is one in which universal principles of equality, non-discrimination and avoidance of taboos and social assumptions are applicable in equal measure within every community's set of laws.

TOPIC: GS II, ASPECTS OF GOVERNANCE

3. Indian Army and Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

- Over 700 Army personnel had recently moved the court seeking protection in counter-insurgency areas under the AFSPA and its non-dilution in the wake of recent moves by the government to reduce the footprint of the AFSPA in the northeast which gives immunity to security forces operating in insurgency-hit areas.

AFSPA- How did it come into existence?

- Armed Forces (Special Powers) Acts (AFSPA), are Acts of the Parliament of India that grant special

powers to the Indian Armed Forces in what each act terms "disturbed areas".

- According to The Disturbed Areas (Special Courts) Act, 1976 once declared 'disturbed', the area has to maintain status quo for a minimum of 3 months. One such Act passed on September 11, 1958 was applicable to the Naga Hills, then part of Assam.

- In the following decades it spread, one by one, to the other Seven Sister States in India's northeast(at present it is in force in Assam, Nagaland, Manipur excluding Imphal municipal council area, Changlang, Longding and Tirap districts of Arunachal Pradesh).

- Another one passed in 1983 and applicable to Punjab and Chandigarh was withdrawn in 1997, roughly 14 years after it came to force. An Act passed in 1990 was applied to Jammu and Kashmir and has been in force since.

- The Acts have received criticism from several sections for alleged concerns about human rights violations in the regions of its enforcement alleged to have happened.

TOPIC: GS II, ASPECTS OF GOVERNANCE

4. Custodial deaths in India
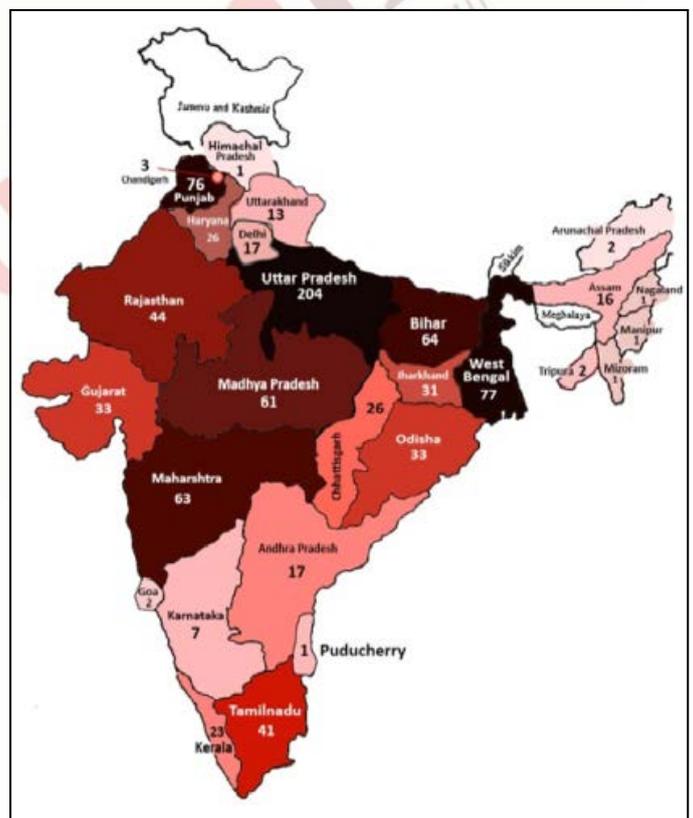
Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

- Supreme Court has increased the prison sentence of the accused Maharashtra police officers from three years to seven years in a case of custodial torture where a man died in a police station cell in 1993 and stated that the police should realise that in a democracy the means to achieve crime control is as important as the end itself in a message to the Maharashtra police and emphasized over the sentence-"With great power comes great responsibility".

- It also ordered police force to realise and accept the concept of democratic policing.

What is custodial torture?

- Custodial torture ranging from assault of various types to death by the police for extortion of confessions and imputation of evidence in custody. Such a method of investigation and detection of a crime, in the backdrop of expanding idea of 'humane' administration of criminal justice, not only disregards human rights of an individual but also exposes him to unwarranted violence and torture by those who are expected to 'protect' him.

Custodial death in India:

- A total of 894 deaths in judicial custody — and 74 deaths in police custody — have been recorded in India in 2017.

- Uttar Pradesh leads the chart of deaths in judicial custody with 204 deaths recorded in the period between 1 January, 2017 and 2 August, 2017 followed by Punjab with 76 deaths and Bihar with 64 deaths.

- Uttar Pradesh has a history of consistently topping the charts of judicial custody deaths in the country.

- Of the 74 deaths in police custody in 2017, Maharashtra leads the tables with 16 deaths recorded until 2 August, 2017. Telangana comes a distant second with 7 deaths, while Karnataka recorded a third-highest 5 deaths in police custody this year.

TOPIC: GS II, REGULATORY BODIES

5. CCI Widens probe into unfair pricing

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

The Competition Commission of India has widened its scope of investigation in the matter relating to alleged unfair pricing by super-specialty hospitals in and around Delhi by starting inquiriy into the alleged violation of provisions of Section 3 and 4 of the Competition Act, 2002 relating to imposition of unfair prices by private super- speciality hospitals.

About Competition Act 2002:

- The Competition Act, 2002 was enacted by the Parliament of India and governs Indian competition law. It replaced the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969. Under this legislation, the Competition Commission of India was established to prevent the activities that have an adverse effect on competition in India.

- This act extends to whole of India except the State of Jammu and Kashmir.

- It is a tool to implement and enforce competition policy and to prevent and punish anti-competitive business practices by firms and unnecessary Government interference in the market.

- Competition law is equally applicable on written as well as oral agreement, arrangements between the enterprises or persons.

- The Competition Act, 2002 was amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007 and again by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2009.

Function:

- To prohibit the agreements or practices that restricts free trading and also the competition between two business entities.

- To ban the abusive situation of the market monopoly.

- To provide the opportunity to the entrepreneur for the competition in the market.

- To have the international support and enforcement network across the world.

- To prevent from anti-competition practices and to promote a fair and healthy competition in the market.

TOPIC: GS II, ASPECTS OF GOVERNANCE

6. Compensation for Minor Victims of Sexual Assault

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

- The Supreme Court has ordered that minor survivors of rape or sexual assault will get compensation on par with women victims.

- It extended to minor children the National Legal Services Authority's (NALSA) compensation scheme for women rape and sexual assault survivors.

What is NALSA?

- The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) has been constituted under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 to provide free Legal Services to the weaker sections of the society and to organize Lok Adalats for amicable settlement of disputes.

- Chief Justice of India is the patron-in-chief of the authority.

- In every State, State Legal Services Authority has been constituted to give effect to the policies and directions of the NALSA and to give free legal services to the people and conduct Lok Adalats in the State. The State Legal Services Authority is headed by the Chief Justice of the respective High Court who is the Patron-in-Chief of the State Legal Services Authority.

- In every District, District Legal Services Authority has been constituted to implement Legal Services Programmes in the District. The District Legal Services Authority is situated in the District Courts Complex in every District and chaired by the District Judge of the respective district.

NALSA scheme:

The NALSA scheme would be made applicable to minor victims from October 2 until the Centre frames compensation guidelines under the POCSO.

- The NALSA scheme provides a uniform payment of ₹5 lakh to a maximum ₹ 10 lakh for "loss of life" and to gang rape survivors in any part of the country.

- Similarly, in case of rape and unnatural sexual assault, the victim would get a minimum of ₹4 lakh and a maximum of ₹7 lakh as compensation.

- Among other categories, if a victim suffers the loss of foetus, that is, by miscarriage as a result of assault or loss fertility, the NALSA scheme offers a compensation of ₹2 lakh to ₹3 lakh.

- A victim of acid attacks, in case of disfigurement of face, would get a minimum compensation of ₹7 lakh, while the upper limit would be ₹8 lakh.

What is POCSO?

- The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act) 2012 was formulated in order to effectively address sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children.

- The Act defines a child as any person below eighteen years of age. It defines different forms of sexual abuse, including penetrative and non-penetrative assault, as well as sexual harassment and pornography. It deems a sexual assault to be "aggravated" under certain circumstances, such as when the abused child is mentally ill or when the abuse is committed by a person in a position of trust or authority like a family member, police officer, teacher, or doctor.

- The Act also casts the police in the role of child protectors during the investigative process. Thus, the police personnel receiving a report of sexual abuse of a child are given the responsibility of making urgent arrangements for the care and protection of the child, such as obtaining emergency medical treatment for the child and placing the child in a shelter home etc.

- The Act also makes provisions for avoiding the re-victimisation of the child at the hands of the judicial system. It provides for special courts that conduct the trial in-camera and without revealing the identity of the child, in a manner that is as child-friendly as possible. Hence, the child may have a parent or other trusted person present at the time of testifying and can call for assistance from an interpreter, special educator, or other professional while giving evidence.

- This act stipulates that a case of child sexual abuse must be disposed of within one year from the date the offence is reported.

- It also provides for mandatory reporting of sexual offence which casts a legal duty upon a person who has knowledge that a child has been sexually abused to report the offence and if he fails to do so, he may be punished with six months' imprisonment and/ or a fine.

TOPIC: GS II, ASPECTS OF GOVERNANCE

7. SC Decriminalises Homosexuality

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

- In a landmark judgment, a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court decriminalised homosexuality. The Bench unanimously held that criminalisation of private consensual sexual conduct between adults of the same sex under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code was clearly unconstitutional.

- The court, however, held that the Section would apply to "unnatural" sexual acts like bestiality and sexual act without consent.

- The court held that bodily autonomy was individualistic. Choice of a partner was part of the fundamental right to privacy.

- It has also slammed the government for taking a neutral stand.

Nature of Section 377:

- Section 377 discriminated against a minority based solely on their sexual orientation.

- It violated the right of the LGBTQ community to equal citizenship and equal protection of laws.

Assessments of the verdict:

- This is a much-needed self-correction of a past judicial wrong committed against the community.

- This verdict would become the foundation for members of the community to seek individual rights.

Evolution of struggle against section 377:

The rise of the rainbow

On Thursday, the Supreme Court struck down a colonial-era law that made gay sex punishable by up to 10 years in prison. A timeline of the case

1862: Section 377 came into force

July 2009: The Delhi High Court read down the Section to apply only to non-consensual, penile, non-vaginal sex, and sexual acts by adults with minors

December 2013: A Supreme Court Bench set aside the Delhi HC judgment. It upheld the criminalisation of gay sex and dismissed the LGBTQ community as a 'negligible population'

February 2016: SC Bench indicated that the question of constitutionality of 377 required a possible back-to-roots, in-depth hearing

August 2017: The fight against the Section got a boost when a SC Bench upheld the right to privacy as a fundamental right. The Bench had observed that Section 377 "poses a grave danger to the unhindered fulfillment of one's sexual orientation, as an element of privacy and dignity"

2017-18 saw a flood of writ petitions to quash 377

January 8, 2018: A Bench led by the CJI referred the petitions to a Constitution Bench to examine the legality of the Section and re-visit the 2013 verdict, saying that a section of people cannot live in fear of the law which atrophies their right to choice and natural sexual inclinations

Social stigma attached to homosexuals:

- Bigoted and homophobic attitudes dehumanise transgenders by denying them their dignity, personhood and above all, their basic human rights.

- Noting that the stigma attached by health providers, employers and other service providers to the community contributes to the increased sexual risk behaviour and encourage escalation of the incidence of HIV/AIDS.

- They also do not approach State health care providers for fear of being prosecuted for engaging in criminalised intercourse.

- SC has also highlighted that there exist serious obstacles to effective HIV prevention and treatment as discrimination and harassment can hinder access to HIV and sexual health services and prevention programmes.

- To safeguard the health of persons who are at the greatest risk of HIV infection, it is imperative that access is granted to effective HIV prevention,

treatment services and commodities such as clean needles, syringes, condoms etc.

Homosexuality not unique to humans:

- SC stated that said homosexuality is documented in 1,500 species and is not unique to humans hence it dispelled the prejudice that homosexuality is against the order of nature.

- It also compared homosexuals struggle to those of couples who married outside their caste, religion and faith and are at enormous personal risk. Thus the struggle against the limits imposed by society such as gender, caste, class, religion and community are not just a separate battle for LGBTQ individuals, but a battle for all.

- Recent parliamentary re-enactment of the Mental Healthcare Act of 2017 has also enabled the court to take the definitions smoothly as it no longer homosexuality as mentle illness. It is also an indirect indication of parliamentary approval.

II. SOCIAL JUSTICE

TOPIC: GS II, HEALTH

8. Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS)

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

The Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has issued a directive to stop the manufacture, sale, distribution, import, trade and advertisement of Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) such as e-cigarettes, vaping devices, e-sheesha, e-nicotine-flavoured hookah and heat-not-burn devices, citing the risk posed to children, adolescents and women in the reproductive age.

Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT):

- It is a medically-approved way to take nicotine by means other than tobacco. It is used to help with quitting smoking or stopping chewing tobacco. It increases the chance of quitting smoking by about 50% to 70%. Often it is used along with other behavioral techniques.

- ENDS are often misunderstood as Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) for those who aspire to quit tobacco use

- In most ENDS, instead of tobacco, nicotine is used in a chemical form. Thus, users of these devices believe that they are not smoking tobacco, but in reality, they continue to have the addictive chemical.

- People believe that the cancer-causing element is absent in the devices and are simply getting the

pleasure of smoking. But several studies have found that use of ENDS leads to initiation of smoking.

- The available scientific evidence indicated that ENDS and similar technologies encouraged tobacco use, were hazardous for active as well as passive users, and had an adverse impact on public health.

Comparison of cigarette and ENDS:

- A cigarette contains four to six milligrams of nicotine whereas most cartridges used in ENDS contain an equivalent of 10 mg of nicotine, but in liquid form.

- While the cost of a cigarette starts from ₹7, a cartridge costs at least ₹200.

- Now cos the cost of ENDS is more when it begins to pinch the pocket, most ENDS users go back to cigarettes.

Health Concerns:

- The Health Ministry's notification highlights that nicotine can have adverse effects on the development of the foetus, may contribute to cardiovascular diseases and could function as a "tumour promoter".

- Foetal and adolescent nicotine exposure may have long-term consequences for brain development, potentially leading to learning and anxiety disorders.

TOPIC: GS II, HEALTH

9. Drug-resistant Superbug Spreading in Hospitals

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

- Recent study in Australia has found superbug called Staphylococcus epidermidis better-known as MRSA superbug which is resistant to all known antibiotics that can cause severe infections or even death is spreading undetected through hospital wards across the world.

- It is found naturally on human skin and most commonly infects the elderly or patients who have had prosthetic materials implanted, such as catheters and joint replacements.

- It can be deadly, but it is usually found in patients who already are very sick in hospital. It can be quite hard to eradicate and the infections can be severe.

- It has been found that some strains of the bug made a small change in its DNA that led to resistance to two of the most common antibiotics.

- It has been also found that some hospital superbugs are growing increasingly tolerant to alcohol-based disinfectants found in handwashes and sanitisers used on hospital wards.

About Superbugs:

- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR or AR) is the ability of a microbe to resist the effects of medication that once could successfully treat the microbe. It applies only to bacteria becoming resistant to antibiotics.

- Resistant microbes are more difficult to treat, requiring alternative medications or higher doses of antimicrobials which are often more expensive, more toxic or both.

- Microbes resistant to multiple antimicrobials are called multidrug resistant (MDR) and those considered extensively drug-resistant (XDR) or totally drug resistant (TDR) are sometimes called superbugs.

TOPIC: GS II, HEALTH

10. Draft Charter of Patients' Rights

Source: The Hindu

Details of the draft:

- Prepared by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC).

- If it comes into force, the patients will not just have the right to emergency medical care and informed consent but will also have the right to non-discrimination and seek a second opinion and choose alternative treatment options if available.

- The freedom to choose medicines or diagnostic tests from sources other than those recommended by their doctors or hospitals.

- It has also recommended that grievances redressal by internal grievance redressal units in clinical establishments, then district-level authorities and then the state councils for clinical establishment.

- Rights to information about their illness, proposed diagnostic tests, possible complications as well as likely additional costs due to changes in the course of the illness. Patients also have the right to emergency medical care irrespective of their paying capacity.

- These rights are linked to existing legal provisions – such as the Consumer Protection Act, the Medical Council of India's code of ethics, the National Consumer Dispute Redressal Commission's rulings and a Supreme Court judgment on emergency care.

Reason for bringing such set of rights:

- Currently, some States have adopted the National Clinical Establishments Act 2010 and certain others have enacted their own State-level legislations to regulate hospitals. There is no consolidated document on patients' rights that can be followed by all States uniformly. Hence the charter which includes 17 rights with description, draws upon all relevant provisions, inspired by international charters and guided by national level provisions with the objective of consolidating these into a single document

- This charter is expected to act as a guidance document for the Union Government and State Governments to formulate concrete mechanisms so that Patients' Rights are given adequate protection and operational mechanisms are set up to make these rights functional and enforceable by law.

Issues related to the draft:

- Right to non-discrimination is an important right. Every patient has the right to receive treatment without any discrimination based on his or her illnesses or conditions, including HIV status or other health condition, religion, caste, ethnicity or sexual orientation. But there are enough cases of discrimination on these grounds which are often related to social stigma.

Significance:

- The NHRC expects the charter to serve as a "guidance document" for the Centre and states to formulate concrete mechanisms to protect the patients' rights and "operational mechanisms to make them enforceable by law.

- It will help to generate widespread public awareness and educate citizens regarding what they should expect from their governments and healthcare providers, while upholdings human dignity and privacy.

TOPIC: GS I, SOCIAL ISSUES

11. 'Dalit' word to be replaced with "SC"

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

- The Information and Broadcasting Ministry has issued an advisory to all media outlets not to use the word "Dalit" to refer to people belonging to the Scheduled Castes.

- The advisory is based on an order of the Bombay High Court that advised media to refrain from using the nomenclature 'Dalit'.

Issue with the order:

- Dalit rights groups have opposed the I&B ministry's order, asserting that the term holds political significance and a sense of identity.

- It is opined that the advisory must be withdrawn as there is no reason to tell the media how to do their job, even if it is phrased in the form of voluntary advice.

NCSC on using the word DALIT:

- The National Commission for Scheduled Castes considers official use of dalit as "unconstitutional" because belonging to a 'Scheduled Caste' is a legal status conferred on members of castes named in a list notified by the President under Article 341 of the Constitution.

- Some sources say that Dalit has encompassed more communities than the official term of Scheduled Castes and is sometimes used to refer to all of India's oppressed peoples.

Who are Dalit?

- The term 'Dalit' has evolved over a period of time and has come to symbolise different things in different contexts used for various purposes like self-respect, solidarity and opposition to caste oppression.

- Dalit literally means downtrodden' or broken/scattered" in Sanskrit and Hindi. It is a term mostly used for the castes in India that have been subjected to untouchability. However it has become a word suggestive with meaning, reflecting the struggle of a community to reassert its identity and lay claim to the rights that were denied to them for centuries.

- Dalits were excluded from the four-fold varna system of Hinduism and were seen as a fifth varna, also known by the name of Panchama.

- Dalits now profess various religious beliefs, including Buddhism, Christianity and Sikhism.

- The term dalits was in use as a translation for the British Raj census classification of Depressed Classes prior to 1935.It was popularised by B. R. Ambedkar and in the 1970s its use was invigorated when it was adopted by the Dalit Panthers activist group particularly in Maharastra.

- Mahatma Gandhi sought to remove the stigma of 'pollution' by using the term 'Harijans', or 'children of god'. In course of time, the community rejected this title as patronising and hypocritical. It was only some decades ago that they began to refer to themselves as Dalits.

- Scheduled Caste communities exist across India, although they are mostly concentrated in four states; they do not share a single language or religion. They comprise 16.6 per cent of India's population, according to the 2011 Census of India.

TOPIC: GS II, SOCIAL ISSUES

12. Elections and Youth

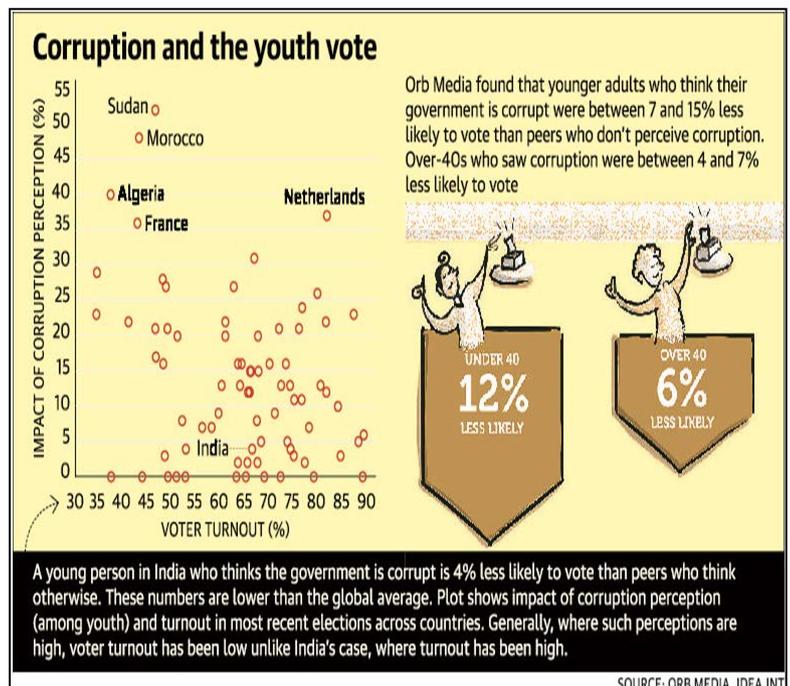**Source: The Hindu**

Why in news:

- A survey across 128 countries found more young adults, who are interested in politics rejecting formal political engagement for street activism

Demographic divide:

- Adults under 40 are between 9% and 17% more likely to take part in demonstrations than those older than 40 which is a marked increase from the early 2000s, when under-40s were only 3% more likely to protest.

- Youth have always voted in lower numbers. But while surveys show that democracy remains the most desired form of government, fewer young people take part as volunteers or party members.

- Other modes of influence from street demonstrations to digital campaigns are increasingly prominent. The gap is widening.

- As more youth choose informal politics, more older adults avoid protest. Many see mainstream politics as morally compromised.

Anti-establishment attitudes:

- In Poland's 2015 elections, many leftist youth decided not to vote for the lesser evil, and to oppose the system in general.

Corruption and the youth vote

Orb Media found that younger adults who think their government is corrupt were between 7 and 15% less likely to vote than peers who don't perceive corruption. Over-40s who saw corruption were between 4 and 7% less likely to vote

UNDER 40 12% LESS LIKELY

OVER 40 6% LESS LIKELY

A young person in India who thinks the government is corrupt is 4% less likely to vote than peers who think otherwise. These numbers are lower than the global average. Plot shows impact of corruption perception (among youth) and turnout in most recent elections across countries. Generally, where such perceptions are high, voter turnout has been low unlike India's case, where turnout has been high.

SOURCE: ORB MEDIA, IDEA.INT

- In Bangladesh, recently thousands of students blocked traffic to demand road safety after two teens were killed by a speeding bus in Dhaka, the capital.

- Youth-led street movements have toppled leaders in Slovakia, Guatemala, Tunisia and Egypt. In each, the establishment reasserted itself.

- Two-thirds of non-voters in the 2016 U.S. election were younger than 50. However only one-third of youth approve of Donald Trump as president.

Entry Barriers:

- It is also found that joining the formal parties is not easy for younger citizens who expect to be heard before reaching middle age.

- Generational chauvinism known as "adulterismo" in Nicaragua cuts across continents.

- In Zimbabway those born after white-minority rule (overthrown in 1980) are called "Born Free and their opinion doesn't really matter only because they did not fight for the liberation of the country.

- Corruption also depresses the youth vote.

- Under-40s who think their government is corrupt were 7% to 15% less likely to vote than others.

- The street and the Internet don't help but influence policy.

TOPIC: GS II, SOCIAL JUSTICE

13. Punjab's proposed Blasphemy Law

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

The Punjab Cabinet has decided to introduce in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) a new Section (295AA) which states, Whoever causes injury, damage or sacrilege to Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Srimad Bhagwad Gita, Holy Quran and Holy Bible with the intention to hurt the religious feelings of the people shall be punishable with imprisonment for life.

Issue:

- Damage to holy books can attract a mandatory life sentence in Punjab, while other insults can attract up to three years. In other words insulting a god or Prophet would land a person in jail, but burning or defacing a holy book would land the person in prison for life.

- It is an relevant and dangerous step as India already has section 295A of the IPC which provides for imprisonment up to three years for "deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings".

Background:

- In 2016, amendments were passed by the Punjab assembly specifically aimed at curbing acts of sacrilege targeting the Guru Granth Sahib. The Centre had then returned the Bills, saying that protecting the holy book of only one religion would make it discriminatory and anti-secular.

- The current proposal is a slightly expanded form of amendments passed by the Punjab Assembly in 2016.

Need for such a law:

Arguments in favour of introduction of Section 295 AA:

- The anti-blasphemy law was scripted as a response to, and not an expression of, religious intolerance. It is not for the appeasement of masses.

- Punjab has never seen a communal riot even once since 1947. Thus interpreting the anti-blasphemy law as intolerant is illogical.

- It is an effort to send a strong message that in order to preserve democratic freedom, it is necessary to ensure that these acts are not used as an excuse to outrage the legitimate religious sensitivities of every class of people.

- Section 295AA will put a firmer deterrent to instil some fear of the law in the minds of miscreants.

Arguments against the introduction of Section 295AA:

- Section 295-A of IPC itself encompasses the provision to protect religious books from damage, insult and sacrilege.

- While upholding its constitutional validity in 1957, the Supreme Court had clarified that the section "punishes the aggravated form of insult to religion when it is perpetrated with the deliberate and malicious intention of outraging religious feelings".

- It is true that any blasphemy law is aimed at preserving public order and miscreants can fan disorder and tension by malicious acts such as damaging or desecrating a holy text. This can be invoked to jail someone for three years. Providing for a life term for the same offence in relation to religious texts would be disproportionate dangerous.

- 'Sacrilege' itself is a vague term, and would render the section too broad.

- On legal grounds, the drafting of the Bill has received criticism for the imprecise manner in which sacrilege has been defined; it should have been clearly mentioned as physical desecration/sacrilege. Otherwise, even for writing a book or an article, or making a speech, or sketching a cartoon, or drawing a painting, a person can be accused of blasphemy

- notwithstanding the rights guaranteed by Articles 19 and 25 of the Constitution.

- This could also set precedent for other State Governments.

- There is a history of misuse of laws aimed to protect religious sentiments by those who seek to punish persons who promote enmity between different groups.

- There have been cases of misuse of similar blasphemy provisions in Pakistan, where similar amendments to Section 295 of the Pakistan Penal Code have led several tragedies.

- To criminalise blasphemy and sacrilege is to justify mob violence and private vengeance against the accused.

Conclusion:

- History tells us that such laws and prosecutions rarely avert violence. On the other hand, they are more likely to attract violence and provide the perpetrator a justification for inflicting violence against those who are unfortunate enough to be accused of blasphemy.

- There is a case to read down Section 295-A and Section 153-A of the IPC that give scope to prosecute people in the name of protecting the feelings of a section of society. There is no need for enhancing jail terms.

III. ECONOMY

> **TOPIC: GS III, INDIAN ECONOMY AND ISSUES RELATING TO PLANNING, MOBILIZATION OF RESOURCES, GROWTH**

14. Public Credit Registry

Source: The Hindu

What is PCR?

- A public credit registry is an information repository that collates all loan information of individuals and corporate borrowers. A credit repository helps banks distinguish between a bad and a good borrower and accordingly offer attractive interest rates to good borrowers and higher interest rates to bad borrowers.

Advantages of having PCR:

- PCR will address issues such as information asymmetry, improve access to credit and strengthen the credit culture among consumers.

- It can also address the bad loan problem staring at banks, as corporate debtors will not be able to borrow across banks without disclosing existing debt.

- A PCR can potentially help banks in credit assessment and pricing of credit as well as in making risk-based, dynamic and counter-cyclical provisioning.

- The PCR can also help the RBI in understanding if transmission of monetary policy is working, and if not, where are the bottlenecks.

- Further, it can help supervisors, regulators and banks in early intervention and effective restructuring of stressed bank credits.

- A PCR will also help banks and regulators as credit information is a 'public good' and its utility is to the credit market at large and to society in general.

- A PCR may also help raise India's rank in the global ease of doing business index.

Why PCR is necessary?

- Credit information is now available across multiple systems in bits and pieces and not in one window. Data on borrowings from banks, non-banking financial companies, corporate bonds or debentures from the market, external commercial borrowings (ECBs), foreign currency convertible bonds (FCCBs), masala bonds, and inter-corporate borrowings are not available in one data repository. PCR will help capture all relevant information about a borrower, across different borrowing products in one place.

- It can flag early warnings on asset quality by tracking performance on other credits.

- Furthermore, absent a public credit registry, the 'good' borrowers are disadvantaged in not being able to distinguish themselves from the rest in opaque credit markets; they could potentially be subjected to a rent being extracted from their existing lenders who enjoy an information monopoly over them. The lenders may also end up picking up fresh clients who have a history of delinquency that is unknown to all lenders and this way face greater overall credit risk.

Task force on PCR:

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) had formed a high-level task force on public credit registry (PCR) for India. The task force was chaired by Y M Deosthalee.

- The task force has suggested the registry should capture all loan information and borrowers be able to access their own history. Data is to be made available to stakeholders such as banks, on a need-to-know basis. Data privacy will be protected.

TOPIC: GS III, EFFECTS OF LIBERALIZATION ON THE ECONOMY, CHANGES IN INDUSTRIAL POLICY

15. National Mission on Government e-Marketplace (GeM)

Source: PIB

About the mission:

- During this mission efforts will be made to bring more self-help groups, artisans and start-ups on this platform.

- The Central and State Governments along with Banks and PSUs will undertake the national drive from 6th September to 17th October 2018 by organising workshops, roadshow, trainings, events and other information, education and communication activities, including buyer and seller registration.

- The National Mission will cover all central government departments, states and public sector undertakings in a mission mode.

- It is aimed at creating awareness about GeM, train the buyers and sellers, get them registered in GeM and increase the procurement through GeM.

- It also aims to promote inclusiveness by empowering various categories of sellers and service providers such as MSMEs, start-ups, domestic manufacturers, women entrepreneurs, and Self-Help Groups.

- It will also Highlight and communicate the value addition via transparency and efficiency in public procurement, including corruption-free governance in sync with the Central Government's objective of 'Minimum Government, Maximum Governance'.

- The mission also aims to give a boost to cashless, contactless, paperless transactions in line with Digital India objectives.

About GeM:

- Government eMarketplace is the national public procurement portal offering an online, end-to-end, solution for procurement of common use goods and services by government departments.

- It provides an open, inclusive, transparent and efficient online marketplace, which provides huge savings to government.

- It is mandatory for central government departments to procure through GeM.

- 25 states and Union Territories have signed MoU with GeM to adopt it as the mandatory mode of procurement for their departments so far.

- GeM deploys technology to completely automate procurement processes and systems, introducing greater accountability in public procurement across India.

Performance of GeM:

- In two years of its operations, GeM has recorded more than 7.25 lakh transactions worth over Rs.11,250 crores and established itself as an open, transparent, efficient and inclusive platform providing huge savings to the government. The portal has nearly 27 thousand buyer organisations registered and about 1.37 lakh sellers and service providers offering more than 4.65 lakh products and services for online purchase and contributes to approximately 20-25% average overall savings to the Government.

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

16. Reserve Bank Tightens Ombudsman Scheme

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

The Reserve Bank of India has tightened the banking ombudsman scheme with the objective to strengthen the grievance redressal mechanism for customers.

New guidelines:

- The banking regulator has asked all commercial banks having 10 or more banking outlets to have an independent internal ombudsman (IO) to review customer complaints that are either partly or fully rejected by the banks.

- The IO shall, inter alia, examine customer complaints which are in the nature of deficiency in service on the part of the bank, that are partly or wholly rejected by the bank.

- As banks should internally escalate complaints that are not fully redressed to their respective IOs before conveying the final decision to the complainant, customers need not approach the IO directly.

Internal Ombudsman Scheme of 2018:

- The Internal Ombudsman Scheme of 2018 mandates banks to grant a fixed term of three to five years, which cannot be renewed, to the IO.

- The IO can be removed only with prior approval from RBI. The remuneration would have to be decided by the customer sub-committee of the board and not by any individual.

- The Scheme covers appointment/tenure, roles and responsibilities, procedural guidelines and oversight mechanism for the IO, among others.

- The implementation of IO Scheme 2018 will be monitored by the bank's internal audit mechanism apart from regulatory oversight by RBI.

Who is a Banking Ombudsman?

- Banking ombudsman is a quasi judicial authority, created to resolve customer complaints against banks relating to certain services provided by them.

- The Ombudsman is a senior official, who has been appointed by the Reserve Bank of India to address grievances and complaints from customers, pertaining deficiencies in banking services.

- It covers all kinds of banks including public sector banks, Private banks, Rural banks as well as co-operative banks.

IV. ENVIRONMENT

TOPIC: GS III, CONSERVATION, ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AND DEGRADATION

17. National REDD+ Strategy India

Source: PIB

Why in news:

Complying with the UNFCCC decisions on REDD+, India has prepared its National REDD+ Strategy.

- The Strategy builds upon existing national circumstances which have been updated in line with India's National Action Plan on Climate Change, Green India Mission and India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) to UNFCCC.

- The strategy seeks to address drivers of deforestation and forest degradation and also developing a roadmap for enhancement of forest carbon stocks and achieving sustainable management of forests through REDD+ actions.

About REDD+:

- Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) under UNFCCC is a global endeavour to use carbon sequestration potential of the forests to manage climate change within accepted limits of tolerance.

- In simple terms, REDD+ means "Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation", conservation of forest carbon stocks, sustainable management of forests, and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries. REDD+ aims to achieve climate change mitigation by incentivizing forest conservation.

India and REDD+:

- Paris agreement on climate change also recognizes role of forests in climate change mitigation and calls upon country Parties to take action to implement and support REDD+. India has communicated in its Nationally Determined Contribution under Paris Agreement, that it will capture 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of Carbon dioxide through additional forest and tree cover by 2030. India's first biennial update report to UNFCCC has revealed that forests in India capture about 12% of India's total GHG emissions. Thus, forestry sector in India is making a positive cost effective contribution for climate change mitigation.

Comments:

- Climate change due to accelerated Green House Gases (GHGs) emission has become one of the toughest challenges of the present. Deforestation and forest degradation is a major source of CO_2 (an important Green House Gas) emission. Forests are both a source as well as the most effective carbon sink, offering great mitigation and adaptation potential.

- Carbon sequestration is one of the ecosystem services flowing from forests, in addition to biodiversity conservation; maintaining water cycle and soil fertility; livelihood supports to local communities. There is a need to recognise the carbon function of the forests and develop a fair, transparent and participatory mechanism to share the financial benefits arising out of national and international mitigation and adaptation programmes with the local communities participating in the conservation efforts.

TOPIC: GS III, CONSERVATION

18. Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats

Source: PIB

Why in news:

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved continuation of the Centrally Sponsored Umbrella Scheme of Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats (CSS-IDWH) beyond the 12th Plan period from 2017-18 to 2019-20.

About Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats:

- The Scheme consists of Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Project Tiger (CSS-PT), Development of Wildlife Habitats (CSS-DWH) and Project Elephant (CSS-PE).

- The implementation of the schemes would be done through the respective States in designated

Tiger Reserves, Protected Areas and Elephant Reserves.

- The activities covered under the scheme include the staff development and capacity building, wildlife research and evaluation, anti-poaching activities, wildlife veterinary care, addressing man-animal conflicts and promoting eco-tourism.

- Financial assistance is also provided to States for relocation of communities from within protected areas to other areas.

- The scheme has following three components:

  1. Support to Protected Areas (National Parks, Wildlife Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves).

  2. Protection of Wildlife Outside Protected Areas.

  3. Recovery programmes for saving critically endangered species and habitats.

Significance of the scheme:

- A total of 18 tiger range States, distributed in five landscapes of the country would be benefitted under the Project Tiger scheme. Similarly, for other two schemes, the coverage is entire country in case of Development of Wildlife Habitats (DWH) and 23 elephant range States for Project Elephant. It would foster wildlife conservation in general with specific inputs for tiger in Project Tiger area and elephant in Project Elephant area.

- Besides immense environmental benefits and effective implementation of tiger conservation inputs in and around tiger reserves under Project Tiger, wildlife conservation inputs in Protected Areas & nearby areas under Development of Wildlife Habitats and Elephant conservation inputs in Project Elephant areas, the schemes would result in overall strengthening/ consolidation of tiger, elephant and wildlife conservation in the country.

- The schemes would address the human wildlife conflict effectively. Besides, the communities opting for voluntary relocation from the Core/Critical Tiger Habitat (6900 families) would be benefitted under Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Project Tiger (CSS-PT) and 800 families under Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Development of Wildlife Habitat.

- These schemes would generate employment opportunities resulting in economic upliftment of people in and around tiger reserves/ Protected Areas besides leading to reduction in natural resource dependency with substitution by clean energy use. People living in vicinity would also get indirect benefits. Local populace would get opportunities to serve as guides, driver, hospitality personnel and in other ancillary jobs. These schemes would foster imparting various skills towards making people self-dependent through various eco-development projects, thereby enabling them to go for self-employment.

- These schemes would result in resource generation through tourist visits, thereby fostering in securing tiger source areas and other areas important for wildlife conservation, besides being helpful in sustaining life support systems as well as ensuring the food, water and livelihood security.

TOPIC: GS III, CONSERVATION, ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AND DEGRADATION

19. Ganga Cleaning Project: From Armed forces, jail term to penalties, read details about Centre's draft bill

Source: Indian Express

Why in news:

With an aim to clean the river Ganga, Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation has prepared a draft bill. The draft bill has provisions for several stringent measures.

Key points of the Draft Bill:

- Cognizable offences marked in this Bill: Construction activities causing obstruction in river, withdrawal of ground water for industrial or commercial consumption from land fronting river and its tributaries, commercial fishing or aqua culture in river and its tributaries, discharging untreated or treated sewage into the river.

- Constitution of an armed Ganga Protection Corps (GPC): The draft seeks to constitute GPC whose personnel will have the authority to arrest those who pollute the river. The offenders may face a prison term of up to three years and a fine of up to Rs 5 lakh. GPC will follow Code of Criminal Procedure. Its personnel will be provided by the Ministry of Home Affairs and will be deployed by National Ganga Rejuvenation Authority.

- The draft bill lays down provision for a National Ganga Council and a National Ganga Rejuvenation Authority to enforce the law and protect the river which flows over 2500 km.

- No person or municipal authority will establish or take any steps to set up any industrial or residential or commercial premises or structure which may result in discharge of any sewage or trade effluent into the Ganga, otherwise he may face a five-year prison term or a fine of Rs 50,000 per day or both.

Background:

- Present environmental laws are not adequate to restore and protect Ganga River. To overcome it, Government had constituted committee under retired judge of Allahabad High Court Justice Girdhar Malviya in July 2016. It had submitted draft Bill named The National River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Bill, 2017. Subsequently, four-member committee was also set up by Ministry to examine the Bill. Earlier in 1998, Justice Malviya, as judge of Allahabad High Court had called for River Police to protect the Ganga.

TOPIC: GS III, TECHNOLOGY MISSIONS
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20. Technology Initiatives for Coffee Stakeholders

Source: PIB

Why in news:

The government has launched Coffee Connect – India coffee field force app and Coffee Krishi Tharanga – digital mobile extension services for coffee stakeholders.

Coffee Connect:

- The mobile app Coffee Connect has been developed to ease the work of field functionaries and to improve the work efficiency.

- This application provides solution by harnessing the power of mobility comprising the latest technology in easing the whole process of the field. This includes activities like digitization of Coffee Growers & Estates with Geo Tagging, collecting the Plantation details.

- It will also help in transparency in the activities of the extension officers and officials, transparency in subsidy disbursement and real time report generation.

Coffee Krishi Tharanga:

- The Coffee Krishi Tharanga services are aimed at providing customized information and services to increase productivity, profitability, and environmental sustainability.

- NABARD has partly funded the Pilot project.

- The solution will help in to reach maximum growers in limited period, efficient, timely, customised advisory, improve the efficiency through digitization and leverage existing mobile reach for wider delivery of improved technology.

Coffee cultivation in India:

- Coffee is cultivated in India in about 4.54 lakh hectares by 3.66 lakh coffee farmers and 98% of them are small farmers.

- Its cultivation is mainly confined to Karnataka (54%), Kerala (19%) and Tamil Nadu (8%) which form traditional coffee tracts.

- Indian coffee, grown mostly in southern states under monsoon rainfall conditions, is also termed as "Indian monsooned coffee".

- The two well known species of coffee grown are the Arabica and Robusta. The first variety that was introduced in the Baba Budan Giri hill ranges of Karnataka in the 17th century was marketed over the years under the brand names of Kent and S.795.

About the Coffee Board of India:

- The Coffee Board of India is an organisation managed by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry of the government of India to promote coffee production in India.

- It was established by an act of Parliament in 1942.

- Its duties included the promotion of the sale and consumption of coffee in India and abroad, conducting coffee research, financial assistance to establish small coffee growers, safeguarding working conditions for labourers, and managing the surplus pool of unsold coffee.

TOPIC: GS III, CONSERVATION
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21. NGT puts curbs on Western Ghats States

Source: The Hindu

Why the news:

The six Western Ghats States, including Kerala, have been restrained by the National Green Tribunal (NGT) from giving environmental clearance to activities that may adversely impact the eco-sensitive areas of the mountain ranges.

Important directions issued by the NGT:

- The extent of Eco-Sensitive Zones of Western Ghats, which was notified by the Central government earlier, should not be reduced in view of the recent floods in Kerala.

- Any alteration in the draft notification of zones may seriously affect the environment, especially in view of recent incidents in Kerala.

Background:

- Western Ghats region is under serious stress. The region is one of the richest biodiversity areas which needed to be conserved.

- The Western Ghats Ecological Expert Panel had earlier proposed "much larger areas for being included in the eco-sensitive zone" though the Kasturirangan-led High Level Working Group, also

appointed by the MoEF to look into the WGEEP report, had reduced it. The Ministry had accepted the Kasthurirangan report and issued the draft notifications on ecologically sensitive zones.

About the Gadgil Committee:

- The Western Ghats Ecology Expert Panel (WGEEP), also known as the Gadgil Commission after its chairman Madhav Gadgil, was an environmental research commission appointed by the Ministry of Environment and Forests of India. The commission submitted the report to the Government of India on 31 August 2011. The Expert Panel approached the project through a set of tasks such as:

  1. Compilation of readily available information about Western Ghats

  2. Development of Geo-spatial database based on environmental sensitivity, and

  3. Consultation with Government bodies and Civil society groups

What did the Gadgil Committee say?

- It defined the boundaries of the Western Ghats for the purposes of ecological management.

- It proposed that this entire area be designated as ecologically sensitive area (ESA). Within this area, smaller regions were to be identified as ecologically sensitive zones (ESZ) I, II or III based on their existing condition and nature of threat.

- It proposed to divide the area into about 2,200 grids, of which 75 per cent would fall under ESZ I or II or under already existing protected areas such as wildlife sanctuaries or natural parks.

- The committee proposed a Western Ghats Ecology Authority to regulate these activities in the area.

Important recommendations of Madhav Gadgil Committee:

Ban on the cultivation of genetically modified in the entire area.

- Plastic bags to be phased out in three years.

- No new special economic zones or hill stations to be allowed.

- Ban on conversion of public lands to private lands, and on diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes in ESZ I and II.

- No new mining licences in ESZ I and II area.

- No new dams, thermal power plants or large-scale wind power projects in ESZ I.

- No new polluting industries in ESZ I and ESZ II areas.

- No new railway lines or major roads in ESZ I and II areas.

- Strict regulation of tourism.

- Cumulative impact assessment for all new projects like dams, mines, tourism, housing.

About Kasturirangan committee:

- None of the six concerned states agreed with the recommendations of the Gadgil Committee, which submitted its report in August 2011.

- In August 2012, then Environment Minister constituted a High-Level Working Group on Western Ghats under Kasturirangan to "examine" the Gadgil Committee report in a "holistic and multidisciplinary fashion in the light of responses received" from states, central ministries and others.

- Its report revealed that of the nearly 1,750 responses it had examined, 81% were not in favour of the Gadgil recommendations. In particular, Kerala had objected to the proposed ban on sand mining and quarrying, restrictions on transport infrastructure and wind energy projects, embargos on hydroelectric projects, and inter-basin transfer of river waters, and also the complete ban on new polluting industries.

Way forward:

- Western Ghats are a victim of neo-liberalism where the level of environmental degradation due to reckless exploitation of natural resources by corporate houses has increased manifold. Kerala flood is a lesson worth of learning for India's disaster management system. India, having more than 7500 km of coastline, should have a strong disaster early warning and management system. Cooperation between the states can create an expert and integrated national structure, to manage any kind of natural disaster.

TOPIC: GS III, CONSERVATION

22. Plan to save Himalayan springs

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

A NITI Aayog constituted group of experts has urged the government to set up a dedicated mission to salvage and revive spring water systems in the country's Himalayan States.

- The group has released a report titled 'Inventory and Revival of Springs in the Himalayas for Water Security.'

Significance of spring water systems for the region:

- Himalayan spring water systems are important as a source of water for both drinking and irrigation for the region's inhabitants.

- Spanning States across the country's north and northeast and home to about 50 million people, the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) has been

heavily reliant on these natural groundwater sources.

• Also, with almost 64% of the cultivable area in the Himalayas fed by natural springs, they are often the only source of irrigation in the region.

Challenges:

• Almost half of the perennial springs have already dried up or have become seasonal and tens of thousands of villages are currently facing acute water shortage for drinking and other domestic purposes.

• Almost 60% of low-discharge springs that provided water to small habitations in the Himalayan region have reported clear decline during the last couple of decades.

• The extent of the crisis plaguing the mountainous region was recently evident when more than half a dozen districts of Himachal Pradesh and the State capital Shimla faced a severe drinking water crisis this May after major water sources either went fully or partially dry.

Threats:

• These water sources today are under increasing threat from the urbanisation caused by a constant push for development and climate change.

• There are also multiple sources of pollution in springs and these were due to both geogenic, or 'natural' causes and anthropogenic, or man-made, ones.

• Microbial content, sulphates and nitrates were primarily because of anthropogenic reasons and contamination from fluoride, arsenic and iron was mainly derived from geogenic sources.

• Coliform bacteria in spring water could originate from septic tanks, household wastewater, livestock facilities, and manure lagoons in the source area or in the aquifers feeding springs. Similarly, nitrate sources were septic tanks, household wastewater, agricultural fertilisers, and livestock facilities.

Distribution of springs:

Meghalaya with 3,810 villages with springs has the highest number of these water sources in the Eastern Himalayan States.

• Sikkim has the greatest density with 94% of its villages having a spring.

• In the Western Himalayas, Jammu & Kashmir had both the highest number of villages with springs at 3,313 and the greatest density of 50.6%.

Recommendation of the group:

• A multidisciplinary, collaborative approach of managing springs that will involve building upon the existing body of work on spring water management is needed. The programme could be designed on the concept of an action-research programme as part of a hydrogeology-based, community-support system on spring water management.

• The task force moots an 8-year programme to overhaul spring water management. This includes: preparing a digital atlas of the country's springsheds, training 'para-hydrogeologists' who could lead grassroots conservation and introduction of a 'Spring Health Card.'

TOPIC: GS III, AGRICULTURAL PRODUCE AND ISSUES AND RELATED CONSTRAINTS; E-TECHNOLOGY IN THE AID OF FARMERS

23. First SAARC Agri Cooperative Business Forum held in Kathmandu

Source: The Hindu

Why the news:

• The first South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Agri Cooperative Business Forum was held in Kathmandu, Nepal.

• The theme of this forum was 'Organizing and Strengthening Family Farmers' Cooperatives to attain the Sustainable-Development-Goals-1 and 2 in South Asia'.

About SAARC Agri Cooperative Business Forum:

• It was co-organized by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of United Nations and Asian Farmers' Association with the support from International Fund for Agricultural Development.

• It provided platform to bring together representatives both from government and non-governmental entities from member states of SAARC as well as from regional and international organizations.

About South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)

• SAARC is regional intergovernmental organization and geopolitical union of nations in South Asia.

• Members: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

• It comprises 3% of world's area, 21% of world's population and 3.8% of global economy as of 2015.

• It was established in Dhaka, Bangladesh on 8 December 1985.

• Its secretariat is based in Kathmandu, Nepal.

- It promotes development of economic and regional integration. It also maintains permanent diplomatic relations at United Nations as an observer.

About SAFTA:

- In a landmark move, SAARC nations unanimously decided to form South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA). Although the agreement was reached at the 12th SAARC summit in 2004, it came into force on 1 January 2006. The agreement not only created a free trade area of 1.8 billion people in SAARC nations (except Afghanistan), but also removed trade barriers to increase the level of economic cooperation.

TOPIC: GS III, INFRASTRUCTURE-WATERWAYS

24. IWAI Makes India's First Standardised Modern Ship Design for Ganga a Reality

Source: PIB

Why the news:

- Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) has made public 13 standardised state-of-the-art ship designs suitable for large barge haulage on river Ganga (National Waterway-1).

- This marks attaining of a critical milestone in the growth of the country's Inland Water Transport (IWT) sector as it will help overcome the unique navigation challenges river Ganga throws due to its complex river morphology, hydraulics, acute bends, shifting channels, meanders and current. It will serve as an enabler for domestic shipbuilding industry working on inland vessels and open huge possibilities for cargo and passenger movement on National Waterway-1.

Advantages of new designs:

- The specially designed vessels will navigate on low drafts with high carrying capacity and at the same time, environment friendly. For the shipbuilding industry, the new designs will translate into a savings of Rs 30-50 lakhs in the building of a vessel.

- The designs will remove ambiguity on the class and type of vessels that can sail on river Ganga with efficient manoeuvrability. They will help shipyards build vessels of standardised dimensions and capacity and make them available off the shelf besides developing the 'sale and purchase' market for inland vessels. The designs will lead to reduced fuel costs and in turn lesser logistics costs.

- These vessels will sail even in depths of about two metres carrying about 350 cars on a five deck car carrier. Some of the designs would enable movement of bulk cargo carriers with capacity of 2500 tonnes at three metres depth, thereby, removing almost 150 truckloads of pressure from the road or one full rail rake with the plying of just one such vessel.

- The new designs will obviate the dependence of Indian Ship builders on foreign ship designs for IWT and prove to be a boost to 'Make in India' initiative of the Government.

About Jal Marg Vikas Project:

- The Jal Marg Vikas Project seeks to facilitate plying of vessels with capacity of 1,500-2,000 tonnes in the Haldia- Varanasi stretch of the River Ganga.

- The major works being taken up under JMVP are development of fairway, Multi-Modal Terminals, strengthening of river navigation system, conservancy works, modern River Information System (RIS), Digital Global Positioning System (DGPS), night navigation facilities, modern methods of channel marking etc.

- Implementation: The JMVP, which is expected to be completed by March, 2023, is being implemented with the financial and technical support of the World Bank.

- Benefits of this project:
  1. Alternative mode of transport that will be environment friendly and cost effective.
  2. Contribution in bringing down the logistics cost in the country.
  3. Mammoth Infrastructure development like multi-modal and inter-modal terminals, Roll on – Roll off (Ro-Ro) facilities, ferry services, navigation aids.
  4. Socio-economic impetus.
  5. Huge employment generation.

About Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI):

- Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) is the statutory authority in charge of the waterways in India.

- IWAI came into existence on 27th October 1986 for development and regulation of inland waterways for shipping and navigation.

- The Authority primarily undertakes projects for development and maintenance of IWT infrastructure on national waterways through grant received from Ministry of Shipping.

- The head office of the Authority is at Noida. The Authority also has its regional offices at Patna, Kolkata, Guwahati and Kochi and sub-offices at Allahabad, Varanasi, Bhaglapur, Farakka,

Hemnagar, Dibrugarh (Assam), Kollam, Bhubaneswar (Odisa) and Vijayawada (A.P.).

Facts:

- NW 1: Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system from Allahabad to Haldia was declared as National Waterway No.1. States covered under NW-1: States: Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

- India has about 14,500 km of navigable waterways which comprise of rivers, canals, backwaters, creeks, etc.

- India has about 14,500 km of navigable waterways which comprise of rivers, canals, backwaters, creeks, etc.

V. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

TOPIC: GS II, BILATERAL AND REGIONAL GROUPINGS

25. 6th East Asia summit and 15th India-ASEAN Economic Ministers Summit: Singapore

Source: PIB

Why in news:

It was attended by Economic Ministers from 10 ASEAN countries and their eight dialogue partners, Australia, China, India, Japan, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, the Russian Federation and the United States of America.

The participants emphasised:

- Higher global economic growth forecast for 2018 have been welcomed and the members took note of the increasing importance of trade and investment relations among the EAS economies.

- Acknowledging the potential for disruptions that could affect overall market sentiments and global growth, the forum expressed the hope to address challenges in the economic linkages among the EAS members.

- The importance of keeping markets open acknowledged and ministers agreed for improving transparency and predictability of the business environment.

- The meeting recognized the importance of ongoing work to maximize the opportunities and address the challenges presented by the digital economy and the rise of regional and global value chains, as part of the efforts to promote economic growth and integration in the region.

East Asia Summit

- The East Asia Summit is a forum of 18 countries of the Asia-Pacific region formed to further the objectives of regional peace, security and prosperity. It was established in 2005.

- It allows the principal players in the Asia-Pacific region to discuss issues of common interest and concern, in an open and transparent manner.

- It has evolved as a forum for strategic dialogue and cooperation on political, security and economic issues of common regional concern and plays an important role in the regional architecture.

Membership:

- The membership of EAS consists of ten ASEAN Member States (i.e. Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines and Vietnam), Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation and the USA. EAS is an initiative of ASEAN and is based on the premise of the centrality of ASEAN.

Areas of Cooperation:

There are six priority areas of regional cooperation:

- o Environment and Energy
- o Education
- o Finance
- o Global Health Issues and Pandemic Diseases
- o Natural Disaster Management
- o ASEAN Connectivity.

- India endorses regional collaboration in all six priority areas. In the area of Education, India cooperated on the revival of Nalanda University to bring together the brightest minds from all the countries of Asia. In the area of health, A Flagship ASEAN-India Programme for combating Malaria towards elimination was taken at 11th East Asia Summit. In the area of Natural Disaster Management. India hosted an 'EAS-India Workshop 2012: Building Regional Framework for Earthquake Risk Management' in 2012.

TOPIC: GS II, INDIA AND ITS NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

26. KAZIND 2018

Source: PIB

Why in news:

- Indo-Kazakhstan Joint Army Exercise 'KAZIND' is to be conducted between the Indian and Kazakhstan Army from 10 to 23 Sep 2018 in Otar region, Kazakhstan.

- The exercise will emphasis on training and equipping the contingents to undertake joint counter insurgency and counter terrorist operations in urban and rural environment under mandate of United Nations.

About the Military Exercise between the two countries:

- This is the third military exercise between India and Kazakhstan.

- India and Kazakhstan started military exercise in 2016 as PRABAL DOSTYSK which was held in Karaganda Kazakhstan. PRABAL DOSTYSK 2017 was held at at Bakloh in Himachal Pradesh.

Importance of this Military Exercise for India:

- It will diminish the overbearing influence of China and Russia as security provider in the region.

- Access to a resource-rich Kazakhstan thus helping India's developing economy by by-passing troughed Afghanistan and Pakistan.

- As can seek attending of Kazakhstan to denounce Pakistan's support for terrorist organizations and to partner with India on security related matters as both share boundaries with terror-prone countries.

- To counter the increasing economic inroads made by China in Central Asia through the One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative.

- Share their operational experience and expertise and increase interoperability and cooperation with Kazakhstan.

TOPIC: GS II, BILATERAL AND REGIONAL GROUPINGS

27. 4th Summit of BIMSTEC

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

- The fourth edition of Bay of Bengal Initiatives for Multi-Sectoral, Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) recently took place in Kathmandu.

- The Kathmandu Declaration issued at the end of the summit which deplored terror attacks in all parts of the world and stressed that there could be no justification for any act of terrorism. It also called for identifying and holding accountable states and non-state entities that encourage, support or finance terrorism, provide sanctuaries to terrorists.

Boost to connectivity:

- The declaration underlined the importance of multidimensional connectivity, which promotes synergy among connectivity frameworks in the region, as a key enabler to economic integration for shared prosperity.

- An MoU was signed on establishment of the BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection. The MoU provides for optimisation of using energy resources in the region & promotion of efficient & secure operation of power system.

BIMSTEC

- The Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) is an international regional organisation of seven nations of South Asia and South East Asia, housing 1.5 billion people constitute around 22% of population and having a combined gross domestic product of $2.7 trillion.

- It was formed on 6th of June 1997, through the Bangkok declaration

- The BIMSTEC member states Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Bhutan, and Nepal are among the countries dependent on the Bay of Bengal.

- BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat is at Dhaka was opened in 2014 and India provides 32% (65% of region's population) of its expenditure.

Objectives:

- Technological and economical cooperation among south Asian and south East Asian countries along the coast of the Bay of Bengal.

- Sector driven cooperative organization and cooperation in sectors like communication, leather, textiles, transport, fisheries, human resource development, tourism, agriculture, investment, technology and commerce etc. Currently, there are fourteen priority sectors and each member country voluntarily leads one or more sectors. Counter terrorism & transnational crime and telecommunication & transport are dealt with by India.

- The grouping is a bridge between South Asia and South East Asia and constitutes a reinforcement of relations between the seven countries.

Significance of BIMSTEC:

- It does not have Pakistan as its member which often plays the obstructionist role as it has played in making SAARC stagnant.

- It is an instrument for India to realise its Act East policy and develop the North East region along with curbing separatist elements active in this areas.

- It could allow India to push a constructive agenda to counter Chinese investments, and instead follow best practices for connectivity projects based on recognised international norms in contrast to Chinese projects which are widely seen as violating the norms.

Sum total

The focus of the Kathmandu Declaration, adopted by BIMSTEC members at the conclusion of the meet

LENS ON TERROR
The Declaration deplored terror attacks in all parts of the world, including in BIMSTEC countries, and stressed that there could be no justification whatsoever for any act of terrorism

TEAM WORK
The Declaration said that combating terrorism required sustained efforts and cooperation involving active participation and collaboration of the member states

CONNECTIVITY
The declaration underlined the importance of multi-dimensional connectivity as a key enabler to economic integration for prosperity

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other BIMSTEC leaders in Kathmandu on Friday. ▪ PTI

TERROR FINANCING: The Declaration asked all nations to devise a comprehensive approach, which includes preventing financing of terrorists and terrorist actions in territories under their control

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TOPIC: GS II, BILATERAL AND REGIONAL GROUPINGS

28. India-US 2+2 dialogue held at New Delhi

Source: The Hindu +PIB

Details of the meeting:

1. Shared Values:-

- Commitment to defend shared democratic values and expand common interests.

- To cooperate in every way possible to ensure peace and stability as well as to realise the aspirations of peoples from both the countries for continued economic growth, prosperity and development.

2. Defence:

- To rapidly increase bilateral defense trade with improved quality of technology and equipment.

- To create a new, tri-services exercise with further increased personnel exchanges between the two militaries and defense organizations.

- To start naval exchanges between the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command (NAVCENT) and the Indian Navy, for expanding awareness particularly in the western Indian Ocean.

- To expand the scope of India's MDP (Major Defense Partner).

- Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) has been signed which will facilitate access to advanced defense systems and enable India to optimally utilize its existing U.S.-origin platforms.

- To begin negotiations on an Industrial Security Annex (ISA) that would support closer defense industry cooperation and collaboration.

- To encourage co-production and co-development of projects through the Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) and to pursue other avenues of defense innovation cooperation for which a memorandum of intent between the U.S. Defense Innovation Unit (DIU) and the Indian Defence Innovation Organization – Innovation for Defence Excellence (DIO-iDEX) has been signed.

3. Counter Terrorism:

- To increase information-sharing efforts on known or suspected terrorists.

- To implement UN Security Council Resolution 2396 on returning foreign terrorist fighters.

- To enhance their ongoing cooperation in multilateral fora such as the UN and FATF.

- To reaffirm support for a UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism that will advance and strengthen the framework for global cooperation and reinforce the message that no cause or grievance justifies terrorism.

- To encourage the ongoing and future cooperation to ensure a stable cyberspace environment and to prevent cyber-attacks.

4. Indo Pacific region:

- Collective efforts with other partner countries for the Indo-Pacific region to be free and open.

- To support transparent, responsible and sustainable debt financing practices in infrastructure development in the ASEAN countries.
- To recognise ASEAN centrality in the Indo pacific region and respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity, rule of law, good governance, free and fair trade, and freedom of navigation and overflight.

5. Other areas:

- To rectify trade imbalances and to increase bilateral trade, investment, and job creation in both countries.
- To secure Nuclear Suppliers Group's membership for India at the earliest.
- To support a sovereign, democratic, and peaceful Afghanistan and to support for an Afghan-led reconciliation process. The United States acknowledged India's longstanding and ongoing contributions of economic assistance to Afghanistan and also welcomed India's enhanced role in Afghanistan's development and stabilization.
- To work together to counter North Korea's weapons of mass destruction programs and to hold accountable those countries that have supported them
- Full implementation of the Civil Nuclear Energy partnership and collaboration between Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) and Westinghouse Electric Company for the establishment of six nuclear power plants in India.

2+2 Dialogue:

- It is a dialogue mechanism that includes defence and foreign ministers of the two countries.
- It was agreed between the two countries during visit of Indian Prime Minister to US in June, 2017.
- It is similar to India-Japan 2+2 dialogue format between foreign and defence secretaries and ministers of the two countries.
- It replaces earlier India-US Strategic and Commercial Dialogue.
- It puts strategic, defence and security relationship between India and US at the centre stage.
- It is aimed at enhancing peace and stability across the Indo-Pacific region by elevating strategic consultations in the dialogue.
- Both sides agreed to continue meeting in this format on an annual basis and next 2+2 meeting is to be held in the United States in 2019.

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

29. Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

With the 2+2 dialogue to commence and signing of Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement, it has become important to understand structural issues related to Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).

What is CAATSA?

- CAATSA is a punitive act of USA came into existence in august 2017 which enabled US administration to impose sanctions on any country carrying out significant defence and energy trade with sanctioned entities in North Korea, Iran and Russia. Later, a modified waiver has been provided to section 231 of CAATSA which requires presidential certifications designed to protect US alliances, military operations, and sensitive technology.
- This is an act by the Congress, thus the President doesn't have too much of authority over it. Thus, if the President wants to give some waivers to some countries, or to some entities, then the possibilities were very limited.
- The waiver allows the President to waive sanctions in certain circumstances, for six months at a time, as long as he certifies that it is in the U.S.'s national security interests and does not "endanger" ongoing operations.

India's three-fold case for the waiver:

1. No weapons India bought would be used against the U.S.
2. The U.S which wants to partner with India in the Indo-Pacific, would hamper India's military abilities by applying the sanctions or denying the country crucial technology.
3. India has significantly reduced its dependence on Russian military hardware while increasing defence purchases from the U.S., and it would be unfair if the U.S. rewarded the effort with punitive measures.

Issue related to CAATSA and its waiver:

- India has made it clear that it would go ahead with the S-400 Triumf missile system deal with Russia even as U.S. sanctions loom large.
- Earlier, when U.S. officials expressed concern over the S-400 sale, they had assured India that a way would be found by the shield friends and allies from sanctions. However, recent statements show

a change in tone as US still has concerns if India pursued major new platforms and systems from Russia. The U.S.'s change in tone and expectations directly impinge on India's core national interests and interfere in its policymaking.

India's choice:

- Although US has suggested that India should procure alternatives from the U.S, India has its own due diligence to follow regarding what suits it best and what it needs the most. The best product may not always be what is needed. The product that gives the best value for money and performs well under Indian conditions should be procured.

- While the U.S. may expect India to do more for the support rendered by it at various levels but India's defence cooperation doesn't fall in that ambit.

Way forward:

- The India-U.S. relationship has moved beyond the usual rhetoric of praising "large democracies". Given that India is a rising power looking for a greater say on the global stage, the U.S. should be sensitive to its core interests.

- U.S. must find a way out on CAATSA if it is really serious about taking forward the strategic partnership.

- Given that the 2+2 format involves talks at the highest levels, it is an opportunity for India and the U.S. to address the issue from escalating further.

TOPIC: GS II, IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL POLICIES ON INDIA

30. North Korea's Kim sets Denuclearisation Timeline

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

- North Korea has given its first timeline for denuclearization for which a third summit between the head of states of North and South Korea will be held in Pyongyang on September 18-20 for discussing the practical measures towards denuclearisation.

- Earlier, North Korea had said that it could consider giving up its nuclear programme if the U.S. guarantees by removing troops from South Korea and withdrawing its so-called nuclear umbrella of deterrence from the South and Japan.

Steps towards denuclearisation:

- Nuclear disarmament is the act of reducing or eliminating nuclear weapons. It can also a way for

a nuclear-weapons-free world, in which nuclear weapons are completely eliminated. The term denuclearization is also used to describe the process leading to complete nuclear disarmament

- The Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula was an agreed action item between South Korea and North Korea signed on January 20, 1992. The declaration never entered into force.

Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, 1992:

Provisions of this declarations are:

1. The South and the North shall not test, manufacture, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy or use nuclear weapons.

2. The South and the North shall use nuclear energy solely for peaceful purposes.

3. The South and the North shall not possess nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities.

4. The South and the North, in order to verify the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, shall conduct inspection of the objects selected by the other side and agreed upon between the two sides, in accordance with procedures and methods to be determined by the South-North Joint Nuclear Control Commission.

5. The South and the North, in order to implement this joint declaration, shall establish and operate a South-North joint Nuclear Control Commission within one month of the effectuation of this joint declaration.

6. This Joint Declaration shall enter into force as of the day the two sides exchange appropriate instruments following the completion of their respective procedures for bringing it into effect.

VI. SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

TOPIC: GS III, AWARENESS IN SPACE

31. Japan to test mini 'space elevator'

Source: The Hindu

Why in news:

A Japanese team has developed a space elevator and will conduct a first trial this month, blasting off a miniature version on satellites to test the technology.

Key points:

- The test equipment, produced by researchers at Shizuoka University, will hitch a ride on an H-2B rocket being launched by Japan's space agency.

- The test involves a miniature elevator stand-in a box just 6 cm long, 3 cm wide, and 3 cm high.

- The mini-elevator will travel along the cable from a container in one of the satellites.
- If all goes well, it will provide proof of concept by moving along a 10-metre cable suspended in space between two mini satellites that will keep it taut.
- It's going to be the world's first experiment to test elevator movement in space.

Background:

- The idea was first proposed in 1895 by Russian scientist Konstantin Tsiolkovsky after he saw the Eiffel Tower in Paris, and was revisited nearly a century later in a novel by Arthur C. Clarke. But technical barriers have always kept plans stuck at the conceptual stage.

Way forward:

- Japanese construction firm Obayashi, which is collaborating with the Shizuoka university project, is also exploring other ways to build its own space elevator to put tourists in space in 2050.
- The company has said it could use carbon nanotube technology, which is more than 20 times stronger than steel, to build a lift shaft 96,000 kilometres (roughly 60,000 miles) above the Earth.

TOPIC: GS III, DISASTER AND DISASTER MANAGEMENT

32. IOWave 18: Tsunami Warning Exercise in the Indian Ocean

Source: UNESCO

Why in news:

Indian Ocean Wave Exercise 2018 (IOWave18) is being held in the Indian Ocean.

About IOWave 18:

- This tsunami warning exercise is being organised by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO. It was the IOC that coordinated the setting up of the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (IOTWMS) in the aftermath of December 2004 tsunami.
- India along with 23 other nations is participating in this major Indian ocean-wide tsunami mock drill which involves evacuation of thousands of people from coastal areas in over half a dozen coastal states.
- Besides testing the standard operating procedure (SOP) and communication links at all levels of the warning chain, a primary objective of IOWave18 exercise is to enhance tsunami preparedness at community level.

- The purpose of exercise is to increase tsunami preparedness, evaluate response capabilities in each state and improve coordination throughout the region.

Significance of the exercise:

- Exercise IOWave18 will simulate Indian Ocean countries being put in a tsunami warning situation and require the respective National Tsunami Warning Centres and the Disaster Management Offices in each country to implement their Standard Operating Procedures.
- IOWave18 will also provide an opportunity for Member States to test the indicators of Indian Ocean Tsunami Ready (IOTR) programme in pilot communities. IOTR is a community performance-based programme that facilitates a structural and systematic approach in building tsunami preparedness.

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC):

- UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) promotes international cooperation and coordinates programmes in marine research, services, observation systems, hazard mitigation, and capacity development to understand and manage the resources of the ocean and coastal areas.
- Aim: To improve the governance, management, institutional capacity, and decision-making processes of its Member States with respect to marine resources and climate variability.
- IOC coordinates ocean observation and monitoring through the Global Ocean Observing System (GOOS) which aims to develop a unified network providing information on the oceans.
- IOC also coordinates and fosters the establishment of regional intergovernmental tsunami warning and mitigation systems in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, in the North East Atlantic, Mediterranean and Caribbean seas.

Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC):

- The Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC), based out of the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS), Hyderabad, is an autonomous institution under the Union Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- The state-of-the-art warning centre, operational since October 2007, has all necessary computational and communication infrastructure for the reception of real-time data from seismic and sea-level networks, tsunami modelling, as well as generation and dissemination of tsunami bulletins for the entire Indian Ocean region.

VII. PRELIMS/MISCELLANEOUS

33. Exercise KAKADU

Why in news?

Exercise Kakadu 2018 will be held in Australia. KAKADU 2018 is the 14th edition of the exercise.

- Indian Naval Ship Sahyadri has reached Port of Darwin, Australia to participate in multilateral regional maritime exercise KAKADU 2018 conducted by Australia.

- INS Sahyadri was earlier deployed in South China Sea and Pacific Ocean for over four months and had represented Indian Navy in multinational exercises MALABAR 18 at Guam and RIMPAC 18 at Hawaii.

About Exercise KAKADU:

- It is premier multilateral regional maritime engagement hosted by Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and supported by Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). It was started in 1993. It is held biennially in Darwin and Northern Australian Exercise Areas (NAXA). Exercise KAKADU derives its name from Kakadu National Park, which is protected area in the northern territory of Australia and located 171 km south-east of Darwin.

About KAKADU 2018:

- It is aimed at enhancing inter-operability and development of common understanding of procedures for maritime operations. It will see participation of 23 warships, one submarine, 45 aircraft, 250 marines and approximately 52 foreign staff from over 25 different countries including India and China.

Significance of the exercise:

- During the exercise, professional exchanges in harbour and diverse range of activities at sea, including complex surface, sub-surface and air operations will be conducted for sharing of best practices and honing of operational skills.

- Indian Navy's participation in KAKADU-18 will provide it opportunity to engage with regional partners and undertake multinational maritime activities ranging from constabulary operations to high-end maritime warfare in combined environment.

34. Mauritius remains top source of FDI

- As per the latest data by RBI, Mauritius was the top source of foreign direct investment (FDI) into India in 2017-18 followed by Singapore.

- The total FDI in FY 18 stood at $37.36 billion in financial year which was marginal rise over $36.31 billion recorded in the previous fiscal 2016-17.

35. Lockheed Martin, Tata JV to make F-16 jet wings in India

Why in news?

- American security and aerospace giant Lockheed Martin has entered into an agreement with Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) to manufacture wings of its F-16 fighter jets in India.

- Lockhead Martin and TASL already have entered into partnership for C-130J [Super Hercules airlifter] and S-92 [helicopter].

Significance:

- The proposed production of F-16 wings in India is not contingent upon company winning order from IAF for these planes. It will help to push local manufacturing that will generate jobs and also end armed forces dependence on imports.

- Producing F-16 wings in India will support Central Government's flagship 'Make in India' programme and strengthen Lockheed Martin' strategic partnership with TASL.

36. Ramon Magsaysay Award

Why in news:

- Two Indians, Bharat Vatwani and Sonam Wangchuk, received the Ramon Magsaysay award, popularly known as Asia's Nobel Prize.

- Vatwani has dedicated his life to rescuing mentally ill people from the streets and providing them with shelter and treatment through his Shraddha Rehabilitaion Foundation. Since 1988, Mr. Vatwani has helped around 7,000 mental patients, reuniting many of them with their families.

- Wangchuk has been recognised for his uniquely systematic, collaborative and community-driven reform of learning systems in remote northern India, thus improving the life opportunities of Ladakhi youth, and his constructive engagement of all sectors in local society to harness science and culture creatively for economic progress.

- Other awardees include Cambodian activist Youk Chhang, Howard Dee (Philippines), Vo Thi Hoang Yen(Vietnam) and Maria de Lourdes Martins Cruz(East Timor).

Ramon Magsaysay award:

- The Ramon Magsaysay Award is an annual award established to perpetuate former Philippine President Ramon Magsaysay's example of integrity in governance, courageous

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37. Cholanaikkan Tribe

Why in news:

Chola Naikar tribe of Kerala is leaving the forests for the plains after the devastating floods of Kerala.

About the tribe:

- They are an ethnic group in the state of Kerala specially Silent Valley National Park
- They speak the Cholanaikkan language, which belongs to the Dravidian family.
- The Cholanaikkan call themselves as 'Malanaikan' or 'Sholanaikan'.
- They are called Cholanaikan because they inhabit the interior forests. 'Chola' or 'shoals' means deep ever green forest, and 'naikan' means King.
- They have traditionally collected minor forest produce, such as honey, which they brought into town to sell. In turn, they bought essentials and returned to the forest.

38. Currency Building and Metcalfe Hall

Why in news:

Two of Kolkata's oldest colonial buildings, Currency Building and Metcalfe Hall, both built in the 19th century, will become museums and galleries showcasing art and urban history.

Currency Building:

- The three-storied Currency Building in Dalhousie Square was built in 1833. It is designed in the Italian style with Venetian windows and cast iron gates.
- It was built for housing the Agra Bank and later, the Government of India occupied large parts of the building for housing and issuing paper currency.
- Archaeologists say the Currency Building was not a mint but a place where currency was kept.
- Till 1937, the building served as the first office of the Reserve Bank of India.
- It was built when the Lord William Bentinck was the Governor General of the British India.

- The cast iron gates, large brick arches and Venetian windows with intricate designs are the main attractions of the building. The roof is arched with iron joists and the floor is covered with marble and chunar sandstone.

- The western wing is to become the office of the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA).
- The Currency Building will now host an exhibition of sketches and sculptures by Ramkinkar Baij, a pioneer of modern Indian sculpture.

Metcalfe Hall

- It is a heritage building situated in Kolkata.
- It was built in the years 1840-1844 with 30 Corinthian pillars.
- The design was prepared by the city magistrate, C.K. Robinson and named after Sir Charles T. Metcalfe, the Governor-General of India, in honour of his efforts towards a free press.
- The architecture is reflective of the British imperial architecture facing the Hooghly river on the West.

39. 2nd World Hindu Congress

Why in news

The Vice President of India has been to United States of America on a two-day visit on September 8-9, 2018 to address the 2nd World Hindu Congress being held in Chicago on the occasion of 125th Anniversary of Swami

Vivekananda's Historic Speech at the Parliament of the World's Religions in 1893.

Parliament of the World's Religions (1893):

- Swami Vivekananda represented India and Hinduism at the Parliament of the World's Religions (1893). This was the first World's Parliament of Religions and it was held from 11 to 27 September 1893.

- He began his journey to America from Bombay, India on 31 May 1893 and on the way he visited China, Japan and Canada and accidently met Jamshedji Tata.

- At the parliament he delivered speech on Vedic religion (Hinduism) as a religion which has taught the world both tolerance and universal acceptance.

Question:

1. **The Indian Post and Payment Bank is a significant step towards financial inclusion in India. Do you agree? Although Indian post offices have their existence in India for more than a century as a government agency but for becoming a successful profit making agencies it will have to overcome many challenges. What are those challenges?**

2. **Uniform Civil Code is still a distant dream for India. Comment. India adopted one of the most modern constitution of the world, yet did not implement Uniform Civil Code which is itself a modern concept. Why?**

3. **Critically analyse the charter of patient rights. Do you think that it is a step towards universalisation of health care in India?**

4. **Describe the concept of democratic policing. Do you think that enough steps have been taken for police reforms in India?**

5. **A world wide trend among the youth who are considered to be the backbone of any country is being observed that they are rejecting formal political engagement in favour of street protest. Why? Is it present in the world from years or it is the creation of digital media?**

6. **Although the LGBT communities have won legal battle in India but fight against the society still persists. Comment**

7. **India's membership of SCO is a beneficial for the Central Asian Countries as well as India. Discuss.**

8. **Do you think that BIMSTEC has surpassed SAARC in terms of importance for the South Asian countries?**
   Boosting connectivity will be panacea for the member countries of BIMSTEC for tackling other problems. Comment.

9. **How far defence agreements are shaping the changing relation between India and United States? Do you think that India's increasing engagements with US will be a Zero sum approach for its traditional partners?**