



UNIQUE IAS ACADEMY
The Best Coaching Center in Coimbatore
NVN Layout, New Siddhapudur, Gandhipuram, Coimbatore
Ph: 0422 4204182, 98842 67599

Unemployment data based on draft report'

Context:

- ❖ In 2017-18, the country's unemployment rate stood at a 45-year high of 6.1%, according to the National Sample Survey Office's periodic labour force survey (PLFS).

Highlights of the NSSO - PLFS Data:

- ❖ The data was collected by the NSSO between July 2017 and June 2018 – and is the first official survey that at the country's employment situation after Prime Minister Modi announced the demonetisation of high-value currency notes in November 2016.
- ❖ The report states that unemployment was last this high in 1972-73.

Data and facts:

- ❖ The unemployment rate in the country had gone down to 2.2% in 2011-12, according to NSSO data.
- ❖ Joblessness for rural male youth (aged 15-29) went from 5% in 2011-12 to 17.4% in 2017-18. For rural women in the same age group, joblessness went from 4.8% in 2011-12 to 13.6% in 2017-18
- ❖ For educated rural females, the unemployment rate ranged from 9.7 per cent to 15.2 percent during 2004-05 to 2011-12 which rose to 17.3 per cent in 2017-18

Labour Force Participation Rate:

- ❖ The labour force participation rate (number of people of working age actively seeking jobs) also went down
- ❖ The LFPR, which has been decreasing from 2004-05 went from 39.5% in 2011-12 to 36.9% in 2017-18.

Government Response:

- ❖ NITI Aayog VC Dr Rajiv Kumar claimed that confusion was being created by leaking a draft report and that it's "not correct" to compare it to the 2011-12 NSSO data.
- ❖ We have just received data for the July-September 2018 and October-December 2018 quarters which is still being processed," Kumar said, adding that changing trends in employment (delta) can only be ascertained after the final data for the six quarters is out.
- ❖ "The data from July-October 2017 can only be compared to data from July-October 2018," he added.

- ❖ Citing favourable figures from various reports (McKinsey, EPFO data, etc.,) they rubbished claims of rising unemployment and claimed that at least 7 to 7.7 million jobs were being created yearly.
- ❖ “Various analysis shows that the country needs around 7 million jobs every year, we are creating enough for new entrants, but the challenge is to generate more employment for those exiting low-productivity jobs like agriculture,” Kant said.
- ❖ Earlier, surveys conducted by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy had said that 1.5 million jobs were lost just in the first four months of 2017 – immediately after demonetisation.

Interim Budget

Interim Budget and vote on account:

- ❖ The budget presented during the election year is an interim budget which seeks a vote-on-account for four months to help the government machinery to run smoothly till a new government is selected.
- ❖ An *Interim Budget is not the same as a ‘Vote on Account’*. While a ‘Vote on Account’ deals only with the expenditure side of the government’s budget, an Interim Budget is a complete set of accounts, including both expenditure and receipts. An Interim Budget gives the complete financial statement, very similar to a full Budget.
- ❖ Full Budget deals with both expenditure and revenue side but Vote-on-account deals only with the expenditure side of the government’s budget

De-Notified Tribes (DNTs):

- ❖ DNTs are communities which were “notified” as “born criminal” by the British Government due to specific administrative as well as law and order reasons. This was done under a series of laws starting with the Criminal Tribes Act, 1871. After Independence, the Act was repealed in 1952, and the communities were “de-notified”, hence the name de-notified tribes.

Nomadic Tribes (NTs):

- ❖ NTs are communities that **do not have a fixed home and keep on moving from one place to another**.
- ❖ They may have a story of their origin, the place where they lived before journeying eternally, but they do not have a place to return after travelling for their livelihood.

Semi- Nomadic Tribes (SNTs):

- ❖ SNTs are “partial nomads”. They have fixed habitations to which they return once in a year, or when their occupational activities are expected to cease for a while.

Not really bullish on native cow breeds

Context:

- ❖ The Finance Minister Piyush Goyal announced the allotment of Rs 750 crore to the Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM).
- ❖ The objective is to get native breeds to produce more milk, be more fecund, and to raise the quality of Indian cows and bulls to eventually outpace Jerseys and Holstein

Rashtriya Gokul Mission

- ❖ Potential to enhance the productivity of the indigenous breeds of India through professional farm management and superior nutrition is immense. For this it is essential to promote conservation and development of indigenous breeds.
- ❖ The “Rashtriya Gokul Mission” aims to conserve and develop indigenous breeds in a focused and scientific manner

Objectives

- ❖ To undertake breed improvement program for indigenous cattle breeds so as to improve genetic makeup and increase the stock
- ❖ To enhance milk production and productivity of indigenous bovines
- ❖ To upgrade nondescript cattle using elite indigenous breeds like Gir, Sahiwal, Rathi, Tharparkar, Red Sindhi
- ❖ To distribute disease free high genetic merit bulls of indigenous breeds for natural service

Components:

- ❖ Establishment of village level Integrated Indigenous Cattle Centres viz Gokul Gram
- ❖ Strengthening of bull mother farms to conserve high genetic merit Indigenous Breeds
- ❖ Establishment of Field Performance Recording (FPR) in the breeding tract.
- ❖ Assistance to Institutions/Institutes which are repositories of best germplasm
- ❖ Implementation of Pedigree Selection Programme for the Indigenous Breeds with large population
- ❖ Establishing Gopalan Sangh- Breeder’s Societies
- ❖ Distribution of disease free high genetic merit bulls for natural service.
- ❖ Incentive to farmers maintaining elite animals of indigenous breeds
- ❖ Award to Farmers (Gopal Ratna) and Breeders’ Societies (Kamadhenu)
- ❖ Organization of Milk Yield Competitions for indigenous breeds
- ❖ Organization of Training Programme for technical and non technical

Farm pension: just a drizzle in the drought?

Context:

- ❖ The government launched The new scheme, called the Pradhan MantriKisanSammanNidhi (PM-KISAN).

Pradhan MantriKisanSammanNidhi (PM-KISAN):

- ❖ he scheme will provide assured income support to small and marginal farmers.
- ❖ Under the scheme, farmers with small landholdings, of up to two hectares, will be provided direct income support of Rs 6,000 per year.
- ❖ The annual support of Rs 6,000 will be paid directly into beneficiary bank accounts over the course of the year in three instalments of Rs 2,000 each.
- ❖ The scheme is expected to benefit more than 12 crore farming families.
- ❖ The scheme is applicable with retrospective effect from December 2018 and will be fully funded by the Union government.

Criticism:

- ❖ Several agricultural economists and farm activists have argued that the scheme is not enough to alleviate agrarian distress.
- ❖ Further, the scheme's payout is lower than what is being given by two States which already implement similar schemes:
 - ✓ TelanganaRythuBandhu scheme which gives farmers Rs 10,000 an acre a year,
 - ✓ Odisha's KALIA scheme, which is giving Rs 10,000 a household a year to small landholders as well as landless tenant farmers.

Goyal unveils Vision 2030, highlighting 10 dimensions

Context:

- ❖ Presenting the Interim Budget, Finance Minister PiyushGoyal has laid out the government's vision for India in 2030, highlighting “**10 most important dimensions.**”

10 most important dimensions:

1. **Physical and Social Infrastructure:** To build physical and social infrastructure for a 10 trillion dollar economy- This to include next generation roads, railways, seaports, airports, urban transport, gas and electric transmission and inland waterways.
2. **Digital India:** Digital infrastructure and digital economy of 2030 to be built on successes of digitisation of government processes and private transactions
3. **Clean and Green India:** Through EVs and renewable energy
4. **Rural Industrialization:** develop grass-roots level clusters, structures and mechanisms encompassing the MSMEs, village industries and start-ups spread across India.

5. **Clean rivers and efficient use of water resources:** safe drinking water to all Indians, sustaining and nourishing life and efficient use of water in irrigation using micro-irrigation techniques
6. **Blue Economy:** Coastline and ocean waters and inland waterways to power India's development and growth
7. **Space Programme:** Global launch-pad of satellites. Place Indian astronaut in space by 2022
8. **Food self-sufficiency:** Making India self-sufficient in food, exporting to the world to meet their needs and producing food in the most organic way
9. **Health:** Distress-free healthcare, a functional & comprehensive wellness system for all
10. **Minimum government, maximum governance:** A proactive and responsible bureaucracy which will be viewed as friendly to people.

500 crore for pension for unorganised labour

Context:

- ❖ The Centre has allocated Rs 500 crore for a new pension scheme - **Pradhan Mantri Shram-Yogi Maandhan** for workers in the unorganised sector.

Pradhan Mantri Shram-Yogi Maandhan:

- ❖ The new scheme will benefit unorganised sector workers who have a monthly income up to Rs 15,000. It will provide them a monthly pension of Rs 3,000 from the age of 60.
- ❖ To avail the scheme, workers have to contribute an amount ranging from Rs 55 to Rs 100 each month, depending on their age, at the time of joining the scheme
- ❖ The government expects that the scheme would benefit 10 Crore workers.
- ❖ The new pension scheme will run alongside the existing Atal Pension Yojana

Highlights Of Interim Budget 2019-20

Context:

- ❖ Interim Budget 2019-20 was presented in Parliament by the Union Minister for Finance, Corporate Affairs, Railways & Coal, Shri Piyush Goyal.

Farmers - Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN):

- ❖ to extend direct income support at the rate of Rs. 6,000 per year to farmer families, having cultivable land upto 2 hectares is announced.
- ❖ Under this Government of India funded Scheme, Rs.2,000 each will be transferred to the bank accounts of around 12 crore Small and Marginal farmer families, in three equal installments.
- ❖ To provide sustained and focused attention towards development of Fisheries, the Government has decided to create a separate Department of Fisheries.

- ❖ Finance Minister said that through the measure, the Government wants to promote further growth over 7% to promote livelihood of about 1.45 crore people dependent on the sector.
- ❖ The Finance Minister announced 2% interest subvention to the farmers pursuing the activities of animal husbandry and fisheries, who avail loan through Kisan Credit Card. Further, in case of timely repayment of loan, they will also get an additional 3% interest subvention.

Rashtriya Gokul Mission :

- ❖ Allocation of Rs.750 crore for RashtriyaGokul Mission has been announced for the current year itself. Setting up of “RashtriyaKamdhenuAayog” to upscale sustainable genetic upgradation of cow resources and to enhance production and productivity of cows has also been announced.
- ❖ The Aayog will also look after effective implementation of laws and welfare schemes for cow

Labour - Pradhan MantriShram Yogi Maandhan scheme:

- ❖ Pradhan MantriShram Yogi Maandhan scheme to ensure fixed monthly pension to 10 crore unorganized sector workers
- ❖ A sum of Rs.500 crore has been allocated for the Scheme.

Tax Benefits:

- ❖ Individual taxpayers having taxable annual income up to Rs.5 lakhs will not be required to pay any income tax.
- ❖ Additional deductions such as interest on home loan up to Rs. 2 lakh, interest on education loans, National Pension Scheme contributions, medical insurance and medical expenditure on senior citizens etc, are also provided for in the Interim Budget 2019-20.
- ❖ Thus tax benefit of Rs. 18,500 crore is proposed to be provided to an estimated 3 crore middle class and small taxpayers comprising self-employed, small business, small traders, salary earners, pensioners and senior citizens.
- ❖ For salaried persons, Standard Deduction is being raised from the current Rs.40,000 to Rs.50,000. This will provide additional tax benefit of Rs. 4,700 crore to more than 3 crore salary earners and pensioners.
- ❖ Exemption on levy of income tax on notional rent on a second self-occupied house is also now proposed. Currently, income tax on notional rent is payable if one has more than one self-occupied house.
- ❖ TDS threshold on interest earned on bank/post office deposits is being raised from Rs.10,000 to Rs.40,000.
- ❖ TDS threshold for deduction of tax on rent is proposed to be increased from Rs. 1,80,000 to Rs.2,40,000 for providing relief to small taxpayers.

Fiscal programmes:

- ❖ The fiscal deficit has been brought down to 3.4% in 2018-19 RE from the high of almost 6% seven years ago.

Vulnerable section:

- ❖ A new committee under NITI Ayog to identify all the remaining De-notified nomadic and semi-Nomadic tribes.
- ❖ New Welfare development Board under Ministry of social justice and empowerment for development and welfare of De-notified nomadic and semi nomadic tribes

Stamp duty:

- ❖ Necessary amendments have been proposed to levy Stamp duties on one instrument relating to one transaction and get collected at one place through the Stock Exchanges.
- ❖ The duty so collected will be shared with the State Governments seamlessly on the basis of domicile of buying client.

Space Technology;

- ❖ Higher budget allocation for Space technology.
- ❖ The Finance Minister said that seventh dimension of our vision for the next decade aims at the Outer Skies.
- ❖ The space programme – Gaganyaan, India becoming the launch-pad of satellites for the World and placing an Indian astronaut into space by 2022 reflect this dimension of our vision.

2,119 children rescued in Telangana

Operation Smile:

- ❖ Operation Smile also called as Operation Muskaan is an initiative of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to rescue/rehabilitate missing children.
- ❖ It is a dedicated campaign for a month where several activities are taken up by the State Police personnel to trace and rescue the missing children and reunite them with their families
- ❖ All children residing in shelter homes, platforms, bus stands, roads, religious places, etc. are to be screened by trained police personnel.
- ❖ Before the operation, the Police personnel from each State are properly trained in methodology to extract information from such children tactfully without they getting intimidated, as well as in various provisions of Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) JJ Act, Protection of Child Right Act, relevant sections of Cr.PC& IPC and Advisories issued by MHA etc.

- ❖ To know the magnitude of the problem, data with full details of number of cases of missing children will be maintained and shared at intra-State and Inter-state level. Information about Child Welfare Committees (CWCs) would be prepared and shared among all rescue teams and stakeholders.
- ❖ During the operation, the particulars of such identified children will be uploaded on the 'Missing child' portal of the Ministry of Women and Child Development by the respective State Police.
- ❖ Rehabilitation measures whenever needed are to be taken up in coordination with the other line Departments like Department of Women & Child Development, Police, Labour, etc so that scope of re-victimization is eliminated.
- ❖ Public awareness to be increased by way of national campaign, advertisement on national media, etc.

Payouts to ryots from this month itself: Garg

Context:

- ❖ According to the Finance Ministry the government will start disbursing a substantial amount under the income support scheme for small farmers in the month of February itself as beneficiary data are already in place.

More about the news:

- ❖ Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme, under which Rs.6,000 per year would be provided to farmers holding cultivable land of up to 2 hectare was recently announced in the interim budget.
- ❖ The programme would take effect from 1st December 2018 and the first installment for the period upto 31st March 2019 would be paid during this year itself.
- ❖ The annual expenditure of the programme is around Rs 75,000 crore.

Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) Scheme:

- ❖ This programme will provide the vulnerable landholding farmer families, having cultivable land upto 2 hectares a direct income support at the rate of Rs 6,000 per year.
- ❖ This income support will be transferred directly into the bank accounts of beneficiary farmers, in three equal instalments of Rs. 2,000 each.
- ❖ The programme will be funded 100 per cent by the Central government. It is expected that around 12 crore small and marginal farmer families are expected to benefit from this programme.
- ❖ 12 crore beneficiaries have been identified with the help of Agriculture Census Data 2015-16

KALIA Scheme:

- ❖ The Odisha state government is implementing the KALIA scheme for the benefit of the farmers.

- ❖ An amount of Rs 10,000 per family at the rate of Rs 5,000 each for the Kharif and Rabi seasons will be provided as financial assistance for taking up cultivation under the scheme.
- ❖ Besides, landless households will be provided Rs 12,500 to take up activities like goat rearing units, mini layer units, duckery units, fishery kits for fishermen and women, mushroom cultivation and beekeeping.

Plastic Ban in Indian States:

- ❖ Twenty-five Indian states/UTs now have some form of ban on Plastics.
- ❖ In 2009, Himachal Pradesh became the first state to ban plastic and polythene shopping bags in India.
- ❖ The southern state of Karnataka imposed a complete ban on single-use plastic items in 2016.
- ❖ The capital city, Delhi, banned all forms of disposable plastics including bags, cutlery, cups, plates and other single-use items in 2017
- ❖ Some states such as Goa and Gujarat have also introduced partial bans in areas surrounding religious, historic or nature sites.
- ❖ Bihar, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand are the latest to announce a ban on certain types of plastics Recently.

A 'pink revolution' quietly takes shape in Maharashtra

Objective:

- ❖ To breed imported pigs to address the problem of protein deficiency in a sizeable section of the population that has been deprived of access to affordable meat besides providing livelihood to farmers

Pink Revolution:

- ❖ Pink Revolution is a term used to denote the technological revolutions in the **meat and poultry processing sector**.
- ❖ The Pink Revolution initiative is scheduled to start off in the second quarter of 2019.
- ❖ The 'pink revolution' targets to produce five lakh high quality pigs over a period of 5-6 years.

SadakSuraksha – JeevanRaksha

More about the news:

- ❖ Minister of Road Transport and Highways will flag off a motor car rally to commemorate the 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.
- ❖ During the event MoRTH also launch the dashboard for Road Accident Data of India and its states.

- ❖ The Society of Indian Automobile Industry will also declare **2019 as the Year of Road Safety** on the occasion, to underline its commitment and support for promoting safety on Indian roads.
- ❖ Amar Chitra Katha will release a set of comic books on road safety that it has published. This is aimed at creating awareness on the issue among children in an informal format that they can relate to.
- ❖ In addition to the above, Retro Reflective Stickers on SadakSurakshaJeevanRaksha will be launched on the occasion. These will be put on vehicles to improve their conspicuity.

Aravali Range:

- ❖ It is a range of mountains running in North West direction between Delhi and Palanpur in Gujarat.
- ❖ It constitutes a vital corridor between Asola Bhatti Sanctuary in Delhi and Sariska Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan.
- ❖ The 700km long range and its thick forest cover protects National Capital Region and fertile plains of India from effects of Desert.
- ❖ Aravallis are the oldest mountain range in India and one of the oldest mountain systems of world.
- ❖ The mountain range is spread towards northeast across the states of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi. These are fold mountains of which rocks are formed primarily of folded crust when two convergent plates move towards each other.
- ❖ The process is called orogeny or orogenic movement –an event that takes millions of years to create a mountain range as the tectonic plates move only few centimetres every year. In earlier decades, Aravalli hills region had a thick forest cover which used to act as a green barrier and acted as an effective shield against desertification.
- ❖ Today, the forests in the Aravalli hills no longer effectively act as a green barrier. The forests of Aravallis range are now the most degraded forests in India; most of the indigenous plant species have disappeared.
- ❖ Loss of vegetative cover will lead to the natural drifting of Thar Desert towards the northwest

67% cancer patients in SE Asia die before 70: WHO

Context:

- ❖ The World Cancer Day 2019 was observed across the world on February 4, 2019 with an aim to unite the world's population in the fight against cancer.
- ❖ The Report released by the WHO Southeast Asia on World Cancer Day, Says that 67% of the region's cancer patients died before the age of 70.

Centre may relax angel tax norms for start-ups, sets up panel

Angel Tax:

- ❖ Angel Tax is a 30% tax that is levied on the funding received by startups from an external investor. However, this 30% tax is levied when startups receive angel funding at a valuation higher than its 'fair market value'. It is counted as income to the company and is taxed.
- ❖ The tax, under section 56(2)(viib), was introduced by in 2012 to fight money laundering. The stated rationale was that bribes and commissions could be disguised as angel investments to escape taxes. But given the possibility of this section being used to harass genuine startups, it was rarely invoked.

Problems in Angel Tax:

- ❖ There is no definitive or objective way to measure the 'fair market value' of a startup.
- ❖ Investors pay a premium for the idea and the business potential at the angel funding stage.
- ❖ However, tax officials seem to be assessing the value of the startups based on their net asset value at one point.
- ❖ Several startups say that they find it difficult to justify the higher valuation to tax officials.
- ❖ In a notification in May, 2018, the CBDT had exempted angel investors from the Angel Tax clause subject to fulfillment of certain terms and conditions, as specified by the DIPP (now DPIIT).

Digitalisation of Schools across the Country

Context:

- ❖ The Central Government has launched an Integrated Scheme for school education- SamagraShiksha
- ❖ The scheme will subsume the three erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Schemes of SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA), RashtriyaMadhyamikShikshaAbhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education, from the year 2018-19.
- ❖ Under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of SamagraShiksha, Information & Communication Technology (ICT) component envisages covering all Government and Government Aided schools from classes VI to XII.

Various initiatives for providing education through digital means:

- ❖ **ICT in Education Curriculum for School System** – ICT curriculum for teachers and students has been developed by NCERT.
- ❖ **e-pathshala** – e-pathshala has been developed by NCERT (National Council for Educational Research and Training) for showcasing and disseminating all educational e-resources including textbooks, audio, video, periodicals and a variety of other print and non-print materials.
- ❖ **National Repository of Open Educational Resources (NROER)** – is an initiative to bring together all digital and digitisable resources across all stages of school education and teacher education.

SWAYAM:-

- ❖ The ‘Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds’ (SWAYAM) is an integrated platform for online courses, using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and covering school (9th to 12th) to Post Graduate Level.
 - ✓ It offers online courses for students, teachers and teacher educators. It may be accessed on swayam.gov.in.

SWAYAM PRABHA:-

- ❖ A programme for utilization of satellite communication technologies for transmission of educational e-contents through 32 National Channels i.e. SWAYAM PRABHA DTH-TV has been launched.

CBSE initiatives:-

SARANSH is a tool for comprehensive self-review and analysis for CBSE affiliated schools and parents.

- ❖ It enables them to analyse students’ performance in order to take remedial measures.
- ❖ SARANSH brings schools, teachers and parents closer, so that they can monitor the progress of students and help them improve their performance. It helps schools to compare their performance vis-à-vis all CBSE schools at various levels and also helps parents to compare their ward’s performance within school State, Region and National level. It is currently available for Standards IX – XII.

KVS initiatives:-

- ❖ ICT Skills are imparted in all the Kendriya Vidyalayas to the students of classes III to XII. Through e-Classrooms, Digital Language Labs and Computer labs further, a pilot project e-Prajna has been started for providing tablets pre-loaded with e-content in Maths and Science.

Operation Digital Board:-

- ❖ An initiative has been taken by Government of India to provide interactive digital boards to nearly 15 lakh classrooms across the country for 9th standard to post graduate level, where they can receive lectures from best teachers/professors and access quality e-content, in order to enhance overall learning process and experience of the students.

Survey finds 11,000 children between 6 and 14 aren’t in school

Context:

- ❖ Survey under the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) has identified 11,306 out-of-school children between the ages of 6 and 14 in the capital.

Key findings:

- ❖ According to the latest U-DISE statistics from 2016-17, the number of children enrolled in school education in Delhi between classes I and VIII was 26,19,409.
- ❖ Total number of out-of-school children in the age category 6-10 is 8,404, and in the category 11-14 is 2,902.
- ❖ The number of boys identified as being out of school is higher than girls.
- ❖ The district-wise break-up shows that the highest number of out-of-school children (1,981) were in Northwest. This covers areas such as Jahangirpuri, Bhalswa, Azadpur, Narela, Bawana and HolambiKalan.
- ❖ Districts with high numbers have a sizeable number of resettlement colonies, and a large population pressure on a limited number of schools.

Steps taken:

- ❖ Arrangement for special Training Centres to provide bridge courses. Aadhaar based enrolment is being carried out for identified children to better monitoring

Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan:

- ❖ The Union Budget, 2018-19, has proposed to treat school education holistically without segmentation from pre-nursery to Class 12 under the scheme.
- ❖ The Scheme will be implemented as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme by the Department through a single State Implementation Society (SIS) at the State/UT level
- ❖ It subsumes the three Schemes of SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA), RashtriyaMadhyamikShikshaAbhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).

Objective:

- ❖ The major objectives of the Scheme are provision of quality education and enhancing learning outcomes of students;
- ❖ Bridging Social and Gender Gaps in School Education;
- ❖ Ensuring equity and inclusion at all levels of school education; Ensuring minimum standards in schooling provisions; Promoting Vocationalisation of education;
- ❖ Support States in implementation of Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009; and Strengthening and up-gradation of SCERTs/State Institutes of Education and DIET as a nodal agencies for teacher training

Mumbai-Ahmedabad Bullet Train:

- ❖ The Bullet Train Project, an India-Japan Joint venture, was inaugurated in 2017 and is scheduled for its first run in 2022.

- ❖ With a track-length of 508 km, the high speed train corridor will originate at the BandraKurla Complex, Mumbai and terminate at the Sabarmati, in Gujarat

Intermediate- Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty:

- ❖ The 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty required the United States and the Soviet Union to eliminate and permanently forswear all of their nuclear and conventional ground-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with ranges of 500 to 5,500 kilometers.
- ❖ The treaty marked the first time the superpowers had agreed to reduce their nuclear arsenals, eliminate an entire category of nuclear weapons, and utilize extensive on-site inspections for verification. As a result of the INF Treaty, the United States and the Soviet Union destroyed a total of 2,692 short-, medium-, and intermediate-range missiles by the treaty's implementation deadline of June 1, 1991.
- ❖ Despite its name, the INF Treaty covers all types of ground-launched cruise and ballistic missiles — whether their payload is conventional or nuclear. Moscow and Washington are prohibited from deploying these missiles anywhere in the world, not just in Europe. However, the treaty applies only to ground-launched systems.
- ❖ Both sides are free to deploy air- and sea-launched missiles within the 500-to-5,500-kilometer range.
- ❖ The treaty, signed during the Cold War in 1987, bans ground-launched missiles with a range of 500 km-5,500 km. It was key to ending the arms race between the (then) two superpowers and helped protect the U.S.'s NATO allies in Europe from Soviet missile attacks.
- ❖ The U.S. will formally give Russia and the other treaty parties a formal notice that it is withdrawing under Article XV of the Treaty, Mr.Pompeo said. Article XV mandates a six-month notice period before withdrawal

Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog

- ❖ The creation of RashtriyaKamdhenuAayog for the conservation, protection and development of cows and their progeny will provide the policy framework and direction to the cow conservation and development programmes in the country and for ensuring proper implementation of laws with respect to the welfare of cows.

Impact of Rashtriya kamadenu Aayog:

- ❖ The setting up of RashtriyaKamdhenuAayog will lead to conservation, protection and development of cattle population in the country including development and conservation of indigenous breeds.

- ❖ It will result in increased growth of livestock sector which is more inclusive, benefitting women, and small and marginal farmers.
- ❖ The RashtriyaKamdhenuAayog will work in collaboration with Veterinary, Animal Sciences or Agriculture University or departments or organizations of the Central/State Government engaged in the task of research in the field of breeding and rearing of cow, organic manure, biogas etc.

GSAT-31

Context:

- ❖ India's telecommunication satellite, GSAT-31 was successfully launched on February 06, 2019 from Kourou launch base, French Guiana by Ariane-5 VA-247.

GSAT - 31:

- ❖ GSAT-31 is configured on ISRO's enhanced I-2K Bus, utilising the maximum bus capabilities of this type.
- ❖ This satellite will augment the Ku-band transponder capacity in Geostationary Orbit
- ❖ GSAT-31 will provide continuity to operational services on some of the in-orbit satellites.
- ❖ The satellite derives its heritage from ISRO's earlier INSAT/GSAT satellite series.
- ❖ The satellite provides Indian mainland and island coverage

WHO Global TB Report - 2018:

- ❖ India has the highest burden of TB and multi-drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) -an infectious airborne bacterial disease caused by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*.

Steps taken to control TB in India:

- ❖ **Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program (RNTCP)** :which focuses on case-detection and TB treatment through Directly Observed Treatment-Short Course (DOTS) strategy

National Strategic Plan (NSP), 2017-2025

- ❖ a framework to provide guidance for the activities of various stakeholders to reduce the burden of TB mortality and morbidity, and work towards the elimination of TB in India by 2025- 5 years ahead of the Sustainable Development Targets (SDG 3.3) which calls to end the epidemics of AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, among others, by 2030.

Human Development Index (HDI):

- ❖ The Human Development Index is the result of a rare India-Pakistan collaboration in the global discourse on public policy, having been devised by Amartya Sen and Mahbubul Haq for the United Nations Development Programme.
- ❖ The HDI is a combination of indicators of income, health and education in a country. Its conceptual basis has been critiqued.
- ❖ India was ranked 130 in 2014, and has remained in the same place out of 185 countries in 2018.
- ❖ HDI ranking has not improved despite it being the world's fastest growing major economy in recent years.

Environmental Performance Index (EPI):

- ❖ The EPI is produced jointly by Yale and Columbia Universities in collaboration with the World Economic Forum.
- ❖ The index ranks countries on 24 performance indicators across several 'issue categories', each of which fit under one of two overarching objectives, namely, environmental health and eco-system vitality.
- ❖ The issue categories are:
 1. air quality,
 2. water and sanitation,
 3. water resources,
 4. agriculture,
 5. forests,
 6. fisheries,
 7. biodiversity and habitat, and
 8. climate and energy.
- ❖ In 2018 India ranked 177 out of 180 countries, having slipped from an already very low rank of 155 in 2014.
- ❖ The country is today among the worst performing on the environmental front and its ranking has worsened over the past five years.
- ❖ Government has lowered environmental standards for instance Coastal Regulation Zone Notification of 2018 allows construction and tourism development on land, earlier considered inviolable due to its ecological value.

Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana:

- ❖ Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana was launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on May 1st, 2016
- ❖ Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) aims to safeguard the health of women & children by

providing them with a clean cooking fuel – LPG, so that they don't have to compromise their health in smoky kitchens or wander in unsafe areas collecting firewood.

Eligible:

- ❖ Under the scheme, an adult woman member of a below poverty line family identified through the Socio-Economic Caste Census (SECC) is given a deposit-free LPG connection with financial assistance of Rs 1,600 per connection by the Centre.

Identification of household:

- ❖ Eligible households will be identified in consultation with state governments and Union territories. The scheme is being implemented by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

Objective:

- ❖ Empowering women and protecting their health.
- ❖ Reducing the serious health hazards associated with cooking based on fossil fuel.
- ❖ Reducing the number of deaths in India due to unclean cooking fuel.
- ❖ Preventing young children from significant number of acute respiratory illnesses caused due to indoor air pollution by burning the fossil fuel.

6th Schedule:

- ❖ The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution deals with the administration of the tribal areas in the four northeastern states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

Key Provisions:

- ❖ *The governor is empowered to organise and re-organise the autonomous districts.* Thus, he can increase or decrease their areas or change their names or define their boundaries and so on.
- ❖ If there are different tribes in an autonomous district, *the governor can divide the district into several autonomous regions.*

Solid Fuel Ducted Ramjet (SFDR) :

- ❖ It will pave the way for **development of long-range air-to-air missiles** in the country
- ❖ The ramjet propulsion system used in the SFDR **acts as an oxidizer and the solid propellant reacts as air flows through a solid propellant duct.**
- ❖ Unlike conventional rockets that carry propellant and oxidizer, **Ramjet uses the air as an oxidizer** just like a jet engine. Therefore the weight of the fuel required is eliminated.
- ❖ The SFDR propulsion is designed in such a way that **it allows for an up and down throttling.**

Swine Flu:

- ❖ Swine influenza, also called pig influenza, swine flu, hog flu and pig flu, is an infection caused by any one of several types of swine influenza viruses. Swine influenza virus is any strain of the influenza family of viruses that is endemic in pigs.
- ❖ Influenza A (H1N1) virus is the subtype of influenza A virus that is the most common cause of human influenza.
- ❖ Swine flu is a highly contagious disease, which means that it can spread through human contact and can, in fact, affect a person even if an individual touches the surface that an infected person has had contact with before.
- ❖ According to the National Health Portal of India, swine flu can infect an individual up to 6 feet away, and spreads mainly when an infected person sneezes, coughs or talks.

Forest Rights Act - 2006:

- ❖ The act was passed in December 2006.
- ❖ It deals with the rights of forest-dwelling communities over land and other resources.
- ❖ The Act grants legal recognition to the rights of traditional forest dwelling communities, partially correcting the injustice caused by the forest laws.

Rights under the Act:

- ❖ right to hold and live in the forest land under the individual or common occupation for habitation or for self cultivation for livelihood by a member or members of a forest dwelling Scheduled Tribe or other traditional forest dwellers
- ❖ community rights such as nistar, by whatever name called, including those used in erstwhile Princely States, Zamindari or such intermediary regimes
- ❖ right of ownership, access to collect, use, and dispose of minor forest produce which has been traditionally collected within or outside village boundaries.
- ❖ other community rights of uses or entitlements such as fish and other products of water bodies, grazing (both settled or transhumant) and traditional seasonal resource access of nomadic or pastoralist communities
- ❖ rights, including community tenures of habitat and habitation for primitive tribal groups and pre-agricultural communities
- ❖ Right to intellectual property and traditional knowledge related to biodiversity and cultural diversity.
- ❖ Rights of displaced communities
- ❖ Rights over developmental activities

Nirbhaya Fund:

- ❖ Nirbhaya Fund is an rupee 10 billion corpus announced by Government of India in its 2013 Union Budget.

- ❖ This fund is expected to support initiatives by the government and NGOs working towards protecting the dignity and ensuring safety of women in India.
- ❖ Nirbhaya (fearless) was the pseudonym given to the 2012 Delhi gang rape victim to hide her actual identity

60% children adopted in India between 2015 and 2018 are girls

Context:

- ❖ Recent Data released by Ministry of Women and child development shows that, More girls were adopted in the last three years than boys.
- ❖ Of all children placed in adoption from 2015 to 2018, as many as 6,962 were girls and 4,687 boys.

More about the news:

- ❖ According to **Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)**- the apex regulator of in-country and inter-country adoptions – the trend is a reflection of declining gender bias in India.
- ❖ According to latest data from Civil Registration System, India's sex ratio at birth – or the number of girl children born for every 1,000 boys – was 877 in 2016

Contempt Of Court:

- ❖ Contempt of court is any conduct that tends to bring the authority and administration of Law into disrespect or disregard or to interfere with or prejudice parties or their witnesses during litigation.
- ❖ Article 129 and 215 of the Constitution of India empowers the Supreme Court and High Court respectively to punish people for their respective contempt.
- ❖ Section 10 of The Contempt of Courts Act of 1971 defines the power of the High Court to punish contempts of its subordinate courts.
- ❖ Power to punish for contempt of court under Articles 129 and 215 is not subject to Article 19(1)(a).

In India Contempt Of Court is of 2 Types:

- ❖ Civil Contempt

Criminal Contemp

1. Fifth International Dam Safety Conference

2. The 5th International Dam Safety Conference–2019 is held during February 2019 in Bhubaneswar as a joint initiative of the Government of India, Government of Odisha and the World Bank under aegis of the on-going World Bank assisted Dam Rehabilitation and Improvement Project (DRIP) as a part of institutional strengthening.

Initiatives of Government toward combating Climate change:

India's National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) :

- ❖ which covers eight major missions on Solar, Enhanced Energy Efficiency, Sustainable Habitat, Water, Sustaining the Himalayan Ecosystem, Green India, Sustainable Agriculture and Strategic Knowledge on Climate Change

International Solar Alliances (ISA) :

- ❖ ISA was jointly launched by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and the then President of France, Francois Hollande in Paris on the side-lines of CoP 21 in 2015.
- ❖ The vision and mission of the alliance is to provide a dedicated platform for cooperation among solar resource rich countries that lie completely or partial between the Tropics of Capricorn & Cancer.

State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC):

- ❖ State governments have drafted climate strategies aligned with the eight National Missions under the NAPCC.
- ❖ The strategies focus on issues ranging from climate mitigation, energy efficiency, and resource conservation to climate adaptation.

FAME Scheme – for E-mobility:

- ❖ Union Government in April 2015 launched Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric vehicles (FAME) – India Scheme with an aim to boost sales of eco-friendly vehicles in the country.
- ❖ It is a part of the National Mission for Electric Mobility.
 1. **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation & Urban Transformation (AMRUT) – for Smart Cities**
 2. **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana** – for access to clean cooking fuel
 3. **UJALA scheme** - for embracing energy efficient LED bulbs
 4. **Swachh Bharat Mission**

4th meeting of National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges under POSHAN Abhiyan

Context:

- ❖ The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India held the 4th meeting of National Council on India's Nutrition Challenges under POSHAN Abhiyan under the Chairmanship of Vice- Chairman, NITI Aayog.
- ❖ The detailed report on progress in implementation of POSHAN Abhiyan was also presented by MWCD before the Council.

POSHAN Abhiyan:

- ❖ The Government of India has set-up POSHAN Abhiyan (National Nutrition Mission) on 8th March, 2018.

Key features:

- ❖ The NNM, as an apex body, will monitor, supervise, fix targets and guide the nutrition related interventions across the Ministries.
- ❖ The programme through the targets will strive to reduce the level of stunting, undernutrition, anemia and low birth weight babies.
- ❖ It will create synergy, ensure better monitoring, issue alerts for timely action, and encourage States/UTs to perform, guide and supervise the line Ministries and States/UTs to achieve the targeted goals.
- ❖ The scheme aims to ensure holistic development and adequate nutrition for pregnant women, mothers and children.
- ❖ It is to ensure that malnutrition doesn't affect children's cognitive development or physical growth.
- ❖ The initiative seeks to reduce the level of stunting, undernutrition and low birth weight by 2% each, and anaemia by 3%.
- ❖ It aims to reduce stunting from 38.4% (NFHS-4) to 25% by 2022. A key idea of the initiative is to incentivise Anganwadi Workers (AWs) for using ICT-based tools, making it easier to implement and monitor the programme
- ❖ The Union government had signed a loan deal worth US \$200 million with the World Bank for the POSHAN Abhiyan

Rajasthan clears 5% quota for Gujjars

Acts under 9th Schedule Immune from Judicial Review?

- ❖ In Coelho case, popularly known as 9th schedule case, the nine judges' bench, headed by the then Chief Justice of India Y K Sabharwal, delivered a unanimous verdict on January 11, 2007, upholding the authority of the judiciary to review any law, which destroy or damage the basic structure as indicated in fundamental rights, even if they have been put in 9th schedule.
- ❖ The power to grant absolute immunity at will is not compatible with the basic structure doctrine and, therefore, after April 24, 1973 the laws included in the Ninth Schedule would not have absolute immunity. The validity of such laws can be challenged on the touchstone of basic structure

Foundation stone laid for Subarnarekha port in Odisha

National Board for Wildlife:

- ❖ The NBWL is a “Statutory Organization” constituted under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.
- ❖ Theoretically, the board is “advisory” in nature and advises the Central Government on framing policies and measures for conservation of wildlife in the country.
- ❖ It also reviews proposals for non-forestry use of forestland within National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries, and issue or deny permissions

e-AUSHADHI portal

Context:

- ❖ Minister of State (IC) for AYUSH, launched the *e-AUSHADHI* portal, for online licensing of Ayurveda, Siddha, Unani and Homoeopathy drugs and related matters.

***e-AUSHADHI* portal:**

- ❖ The new e-portal is an acronym for Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy
- ❖ e-AUSHADHI portal is intended for increased transparency, improved information management facility, improved data usability and increased accountability.
- ❖ This portal will aid the licensing authority, manufactures and consumers.
- ❖ Timelines will be fixed for processing of application through this portal with SMS and e-mail status updates at each step of the process.
- ❖ It will also provide real time information of the licensed manufactures and their products, cancelled and spurious drugs, contact details of the concerned authority for specific grievances.

Panel moots minimum wage of Rs 375 per day

Context:

- ❖ An Expert Committee on Determining the Methodology for Fixation of the National Minimum Wage, headed by Anoop Satpathy, has recommended setting the minimum wage at Rs 375 a day or Rs. 9,750 per month.
- ❖ The minimum wage has been fixed irrespective of sectors, skills, occupations and rural-urban locations for a family.

Supreme Court directs NCM to decided on representation seeking definition of term 'minority'

Context:

- ❖ The Supreme Court on 11 February directed the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) to decide within three months on a representation seeking laying down of guidelines for defining the term 'minority' based on state-wise population of a community instead of the national average.
- ❖ The constitution of the sub-committee comes in the backdrop of recent Supreme Court direction to NCM on defining minority in the context of state-wise population of a community.
- ❖ The direction came over a plea seeking minority status for Hindus in 7 states and 1 UT. According to 2011 census, the Hindus are minority in Lakshadweep, Mizoram, Nagaland, Meghalaya, Jammu and Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, and Punjab.

Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan (PM- SYM)

Context:

- ❖ **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan (PM-SYM)** will be rolled out by the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- ❖ The scheme announced in the Interim Budget was notified by the Ministry recently.

Dolphin numbers have shrunk in Odisha, reveals Census

Context:

- ❖ Odisha's recent annual census of dolphins was carried out by the state's forest and environment department

A lifetime of finding genes to counter heart disease

Context:

- ❖ Geneticist Helen Hobbs found that when people had a mutation in PCSK9, they ended up with lower levels of low-density lipoprotein (LDL) or bad cholesterol.
- ❖ This mechanism of mutation protected people against heart disease without any side effects.

Section 66A: SC asks States to sensitise cops

Context:

- ❖ The Supreme Court Friday directed all state governments to sensitise their police personnel about its judgment in '**Shreya Singhal v. Union of India**' which had **scrapped Section 66A of Information Technology Act**, so that people are not unnecessarily arrested under the struck down provision.
- ❖ It also asked all the high courts to send the copy of the verdict to all the trial court to avoid people being prosecuted under the scrapped provision which provided for jail term to people who posted offensive content online.
- ❖ The bench also directed the Union Government to make available copies of the said judgment to the Chief Secretaries of all the State Governments and the Union Territories

Antibiotic-resistant NDM-1 gene found in pristine Arctic

Context:

- ❖ The recent detection of the antibiotic resistant (AR) gene NDM-1, first isolated in India, in the Arctic region is a further indication of the globalisation of antimicrobial resistance, said a study.
- ❖ The research was conducted in the High Arctic zone (Kongsfjorden region of Svalbard) and scientists were surprised to find a rather robust presence of NDM-1, according to Clare McCann, principal author of the study.

Tagore Award

Context:

- ❖ President of India will present the Tagore Award for Cultural Harmony to Shri Rajkumar Singhait Singh; **Chhayanaut** (a cultural organization of Bangladesh); and Shri Ram Sutar Vanji for the years 2014, 2015 & 2016 respectively at Pravasi Bhartiya Kendra, New Delhi

LADIS – Least Available Depth Information System – Portal

Context:

- ❖ Inland Waterways Authority of India launches portal for real-time information on available depth on stretches of National Waterways.

Iran to promote Chabahar as curbs will hit main port

Context:

- ❖ With U.S. sanctions threatening Iran's main port of Bandar Abbas, the Iranian government is planning to promote the Chabahar port being developed by India in a major conference on February 26, highlighting the potential of the Indian Ocean port beyond India-Afghan trade alone.

Great Indian hornbills can adapt to modified habitat: study

- ❖ Recent study published in the journal *Ornithological Science*, says that - Amid a changing environment, with natural homes of birds getting depleted as natural forests make way for plantations and other such modified terrain, comes the good news of how the great Indian hornbill (*Buceros bicornis*) adapts to such change.

Scientists discover massive mountains under Earth's crust

- ❖ Scientists have discovered *massive mountains in the Earth's mantle*, an advance that may change our understanding of how the planet was formed.

Caught down the wire: Punjab's blackbuck fight for existence

Context:

- ❖ According to the Punjab State government data as many as 25 blackbucks died in 2018.

More about the news:

- ❖ The recent incidents of death of Blackbucks have raised concern among the civil society and Punjab government.
- ❖ Blackbuck is the **state animal of Punjab**.
- ❖ In Punjab, it is **only found in Abohar Wildlife Sanctuary**.

2 more States to set up drug price units

- ❖ After Kerala, it is now the turn of Punjab and Gujarat to have Price Monitoring & Research Unit (PMRU), set up by the National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority in collaboration with the Department of Health and State Drug Controller.
- ❖ Earlier this year, Kerala became the first State to set up a price monitoring and research unit to track violation of prices of essential drugs and medical devices under the Drugs Price Control Order (DPCO).

SC turns down petition on use of 'Dalit' by media

- ❖ The Supreme Court has refused to entertain a petition challenging Centre's notification advising the media not to use the term "Dalit" to describe members of Scheduled Castes.

Japan approves stem cells trial to treat spinal cord injuries

- ❖ A team of Japanese researchers will carry out an unprecedented trial using human-induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS) to treat spinal cord injuries.
- ❖ The team at Tokyo's Keio University has received government approval for the trial — which have the potential to develop into any cell in the body — to treat patients with serious spinal cord injuries.

'Lack of cleaning in brain cells causes Alzheimer's'

- ❖ A weakened cleaning system of the brain cells in animals and humans is central to developing Alzheimer's disease, according to a study which may lead to new treatments for the neurodegenerative disorder.
- ❖ Researchers, including those from the University of Copenhagen in Denmark, found that improving mitophagy — the cleaning system of the brain cells — nearly removed the symptoms of Alzheimer's in the animals.

International Vision Zero Conference' to Promote Occupational Safety and Health

- ❖ Ministry of Labour and Employment inaugurated the three days Conference on the VISION ZERO and its relevance to Occupational Safety and Health being held from 18th to 20th, February, 2019 in Mumbai.
- ❖ The Conference has been organized by Directorate General Factory Advice and Labour Institutes (DGFASLI), Ministry of Labour and Employment, German Social Accident Insurance (DGUV), Germany in association with Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay and International Social Security Association - Manufacturing, Construction and Mining.

7 islands in Andamans, Lakshadweep identified for seaplane operations

- ❖ To promote tourism, the newly set up Island Development Agency (IDA) has identified seven islands in Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep for seaplane operations.

Ordinance to curb Ponzi schemes gets nod

- ❖ The Cabinet approved the promulgation of an ordinance with regard to the **Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Bill**, and allowing amendments to the Companies Act to protect investors from Ponzi schemes.

Triple talaq ordinance to be reissued

- ❖ The Union Cabinet has promulgated an Ordinance, namely the **Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Second Ordinance, 2019**.
- ❖ The proposed Ordinance will protect the rights of married Muslim women and prevent divorce by the practice of instantaneous and irrevocable 'talaq-e-biddat' by their husbands.
- ❖ Promulgation of the proposed Ordinance will provide the rights of subsistence allowance, custody of minor children to victims of triple talaq i.e. talaq-e-biddat.

New Universe map unveils 3,00,000 more galaxies

Context:

- ❖ A group of international astronomers just discovered 300,000 unknown galaxies in space.

Key findings:

- ❖ More than 200 astronomers from 18 countries were involved in the study, which used radio astronomy to look at a segment of sky over the northern hemisphere, and found 3,00,000 previously unseen light sources thought to be distant galaxies.
- ❖ The team used the Low Frequency Array (LOFAR) telescope in the Netherlands to pick up traces — or “jets” — of ancient radiation produced when galaxies merge. These jets, previously undetected, can extend over millions of light years.
 - ✓ The map created by the LOFAR observations

Significance of findings:

- ❖ The discovery might help astronomers learn more about the physics of black holes and how clusters of galaxies evolve.

Aussie mammal the first 'climate change extinction'

Context:

- ❖ Australia officially declared a Great Barrier Reef rodent extinct, making it the first mammal believed to have been killed off by human-induced climate change.

- ❖ The rat-like Bramble Cay Melomys — whose only known habitat was a small sandy island in far northern Australia — has not been spotted in a decade.

key factor in its disappearance:

- ❖ Repeated ocean inundation of the cay — a low-lying island on a coral reef — over the last decade, which had resulted in dramatic habitat loss.
- ❖ Human-induced climate change being the root cause of the loss of the Bramble Cay Melomys

Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin phase – II

Context:

- ❖ Cabinet approves continuation of Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin beyond March, 2019 (PMAY-G Phase-II).

Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana - gramina :

- ❖ The erstwhile rural housing scheme **Indira Awaasyojana (IAY) has been restructured into Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G)** from 01.04.2016.
- ❖ PMAY-G aims at providing a pucca house, with basic amenities, to all houseless householder and those households living in kutcha and dilapidated house, by 2022.
- ❖ The cost of unit assistance is to be shared between Central and State Government in the ratio 60:40 in plain areas and 90:10 for North Eastern and the Himalayan States.
- ❖ Selection of beneficiaries under Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana-Gramin (PMAY-G) is based on housing deprivation parameters of Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC), 2011, subject to 13 point exclusion criteria, followed by Gram Sabha verification.

Tejas, world's lightest fighter, is 'battle ready'

Context:

- ❖ India's Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas has received the final operational clearance (FOC) from military aviation regulator for induction into the Indian Air Force (IAF) as a weaponised fighter jet.

LCA Tejas:

- ❖ The LCA Tejas is an Indian single-seat, single-jet engine, multi-role light fighter developed by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL).
- ❖ Its design is highly manoeuvrable, with a tailless, compound delta wing configuration.
- ❖ It came from the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) programme, which began in the 1980s to replace India's ageing MiG-21 fighters.
- ❖ Later, the LCA was officially named "Tejas", meaning "Radiant" by the then Prime Minister.
- ❖ In 1969, the Indian government accepted the recommendation by its Aeronautics Committee that Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) should design and develop a fighter aircraft around a proven engine.
- ❖ In 1969, the Indian government accepted the recommendation by its Aeronautics Committee that Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) should design and develop a fighter aircraft around a proven engine.

Where are the green crackers: SC

- ❖ Four months after banning polluting firecrackers, Supreme Court found that government agencies are yet to decide what is a "green cracker", leading the court to consider a balance between the need to check pollution and protect jobs of the workforce in the business.

Operation Digital Board

- ❖ The Minister of Human Resource Development, launched **Operation Digital Board to leverage technology** in order to **boost quality education** in the country.

Deadlier version of BrahMos to be tested in three years

- ❖ A sleeker, more lethal version of the supersonic cruise missile BrahMos is under development and the prototype should be ready for testing in about three years
- ❖ The idea is to have a smaller missile with the same capabilities.
- ❖ So the missile will fly at 3.5 times the speed of sound instead of 2.8 Mach.
- ❖ The range will remain at 300 km

UN Security Council condemns Pulwama attack

- ❖ The UN Security Council (UNSC) condemned the terror attack perpetrated by Pakistan-based terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), in a show of solidarity and support to India.

WHO prescribes ‘aerobics 150’ to stay fit

- ❖ World Health Organisation (WHO) has prescribed 150 minutes of weekly physical activity, and stating that physical inactivity is now identified as the fourth leading risk factor for global mortality.

A small moon found floating around Neptune

Context :

- ❖ Scientists confirm that Neptune’s tiny, mysterious moon may be a ‘chipped-off piece’ from a larger Moon as a result of collision with a comet that took place billions of years ago.

Hippo camp :

- ❖ Scientists have recently theorised the origin of Hippocamp- one among Neptune’s moons. Originally designated as S/2004 N 1 and Neptune XIV, this moon was found in images taken by NASA’s Hubble Space Telescope in 2004–05 and 2009.
- ❖ Hippocamp, smallest moon yet discovered in orbit around Neptune, is named after a mythical half-horse, half-fish sea creature.
- ❖ Scientists have theorized that Hippocamp was formed from the debris created billions of years ago when a comet collided with Proteus- Neptune’s largest moon.

Additional Information :

- ✓ There are 13 moons floating around the planet Neptune, namely Triton, Nereid, Naiad, Thalassa, Despina, Galatea, Larissa, Proteus, Halimede, Sao, Laomedeia, Psamathe and Neso — all named after sea gods and nymphs from Greek mythology.

NASA to crash into asteroid, ESA to follow up

Context :

- ❖ The European Space Agency’s (ESA’s) Hera mission is set for a new record by becoming the first spacecraft to explore a binary asteroid — the Didymos pair.
- ❖ The moon orbiting Didymos, called ‘Didymoon’ — almost the size of the Giza Pyramid in Egypt, measuring just 160 metres in diameter—will be the smallest asteroid ever explored.

4th India- ASEAN Expo and Summit Inaugurated.

- ❖ Minister of Commerce & Industry and Civil Aviation inaugurated the 4th India-ASEAN Expo and Summit 2019 in New Delhi.

BEL Launches Atmospheric Water Generator safe Drinking Water, Straight From the Air.

- ❖ Navratna Defence PSU Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) has unveiled its new product, the Atmospheric Water Generator (AWG), an innovative solution to meet the ever-increasing need for drinking water worldwide, at Aero India 2019.

Olympic dream under threat as visa is denied to 2 Pak. Shooters

- ❖ India's future as a host for sporting events remained uncertain following a decision by the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Travel on a jet plane, using a little cooking oil

- ❖ Indian Institute of Petroleum (IIP), Dehradun has successfully completed a pilot test to convert used cooking oil into bio-aviation turbine fuel (Bio-ATF) or bio-jet fuel.

Bio-aviation turbine fuel :

- ❖ Bio-ATF is a biofuel used for aircraft. It can be blended with conventional ATF and used as aircraft fuel.
- ❖ Biofuel that can be used as jet-fuel can be prepared using animal fat, vegetable oil and agricultural waste.
- ❖ Biofuel is a fuel that is produced from biomass—i.e. plant or algae material or animal waste. It is considered to be a source of renewable energy, unlike fossil fuels such as petroleum, coal, and natural gas.
- ❖ The attempt to convert cooking oil into Bio-ATF is in coherence with the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI)'s Repurpose Cooking Oil (RUCO) initiative. The initiative seeks to collect and convert used cooking oil into bio-fuel

India, Russia close to inking multi-billion agreement for AK-103 assault rifles

- ❖ India and Russia are close to concluding an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) for a multi-billion deal to locally bulk manufacture AK-103 assault rifles in the next few months.

India to have own DNS for safe browsing

- ❖ The government will soon launch a public domain name system (DNS) server that could protect users from any malware or phishing with enhanced security features as well as faster response time.

What pushed dinosaurs to extinction

- ❖ scientists say that massive volcanic eruptions over hundreds of thousands of years may have contributed to the dinosaurs' demise at the end of the Cretaceous period.
- ❖ Two studies published in the journal Science contributed to a longstanding debate on what exactly finished off the mighty reptiles.

Niyamgiri's Dongria Kondh gird for 'resistance' after SC order

- ❖ Odisha's Dongria Kondh tribals have resolved to resist any attempt to force them out with a recent Supreme Court order triggering panic among forest dwellers over possible eviction.

India's Hyperloop dreams take shape in Nevada Desert

- ❖ Maharashtra declared the company's proposed hyperloop system between Pune and Mumbai as an official infrastructure project.
- ❖ Construction on a 7-mile test track could start this year, said Jay Walder, the company's chief executive.

Guj CM launches second edition of water conservation scheme

Context :

- ❖ Gujarat Chief Minister launched the second edition of the state government's water conservation drive called "SujalamSufalamJalSanchayAbhiyan".

SujalamSufalamJalSanchayAbhiyan :

- ❖ The scheme aims to deepen water bodies in the state before monsoon to increase storage of rainwater to be used during times of scarcity.
- ❖ The scheme involves cleaning and desilting of River Front.
- ❖ Sprucing up of Irrigation Canal

Modi opens war memorial

- ❖ Nearly six decades after it was first proposed, Prime Minister NarendraModi on Monday inaugurated the National War Memorial, sprawled over 40 acres at the India Gate complex in the heart of the national capital.

'Britain should hand over Chagos islands to Mauritius'

- ❖ Britain should give 'colonised' Chagos Islands back to Mauritius, UN court says

India bombs Jaish camp in Pakistan's Balakot

- ❖ Twelve days after the Pulwama attack, the Indian Air Force bombed the Jaish-e-Mohammad's "biggest" terror training camp in Pakistan's Balakot early.
- ❖ The operation was carried out by 12 Mirage-2000 fighter jets, which unleashed five one-tonne bombs on the camp, based 70 km inside the Line of Control (LoC), in the Pakistani province of Khyber Pakthunkhwa.

Nagaland Assembly rejects citizenship Bill

- ❖ The Nagaland Assembly has passed a resolution, rejecting outright the contentious Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2016.

WHO, Ministry conclave on yoga benchmark

- ❖ Ministry of AYUSH and WHO are jointly organizing a three days Working Group Meeting for reviewing the WHO document "Benchmarks for Training in Yoga".
- ❖ The WHO has been developing **Benchmarks Document for Training in Yoga as part of Traditional Medicine Strategy 2014-2023**.

Quick Reach Surface-to-Air missiles successfully test fired

- ❖ DRDO successfully test-fired 2 indigenously developed short-range Quick Reaction Surface to Air Missile (QRSAM) off Odisha coast.

Why Mirage of '80s is IAF's 'weapon of choice'

Context :

- ❖ India with its 12 Mirage-2000 fighter jets decimated multiple terror camps across the Line of Control in Pakistan.

Mirage - 2000 Fighter Jets :

- ❖ The Mirage-2000 fighter jet, which was first inducted in the mid-1980s
- ❖ Soon after inducting the Mirage, IAF gave it the name – Vajra – meaning lightening thunderbolt in Sanskrit.
- ❖ It was developed by Dassault Aviation and took its first flight in 1978 and was inducted in the French Air Force in 1984.
- ❖ The Mirage-2000 played a decisive role in the 1999 war of Kargil and turned it in India's favour.
- ❖ After that, the government placed order for more such aircrafts in 2004.
- ❖ In July 2011, Centre approved a \$2.2 billion upgrade package for its Mirage 2000s.

Aviation Conclave 2019

- ❖ The Ministry of Civil Aviation, in association with Airports Authority of India, AAICLAS and Confederation of Indian Industry, is organizing the **Aviation Conclave 2019** with an overarching theme of “**Flying for All**”

IAF plane shot down, pilot taken captive by Pak. Army

- ❖ An Indian pilot was captured by Pakistan after a major aerial confrontation and chase between Pakistan Air Force planes, which dropped bombs in four locations of Jammu and Kashmir, and Indian Air Force jets that countered them over the Line of Control (LoC).

A.P. gets new South Coast Railway zone

Context :

- ❖ The Centre has announced the creation of a separate railway zone in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh named ‘**South Coast Railway**’.

More about the news:

- ❖ As per item 8 of Schedule 13 (Infrastructure) of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act, 2014, Indian Railways was required to examine establishing a new railway zone in the successor State of Andhra Pradesh.
- ❖ The matter has been examined in detail in consultation with stakeholders and it has been decided to go ahead with creation of a new zone with headquarter at Visakhapatnam.

South Coast Railway :

- ❖ A new railway zone with Visakhapatnam as its headquarters will be formed with Vijayawada, Guntur, and Guntakal rail divisions, besides a section of the Waltair rail division.
- ❖ The Waltair division will be bifurcated and a portion will be merged with Vijayawada division.
- ❖ At present, Vijayawada, Guntur and Guntakal divisions are in the South Central Railway and Waltair division is in the East Coast Railway.

Yuva Sahakar

Context :

- ❖ Union Agriculture & Farmers Welfare Minister has said that National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) has played a crucial role in promoting cooperative development in the country by progressively shaping its financial schemes and programmes for benefitting farmers through cooperatives.

Yuva Sahakar :

- ❖ Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, on November 14, 2018 launched the 'Yuva Sahakar-Cooperative Enterprise Support and Innovation Scheme' of the National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC).
- ❖ The NCDC has come up with this youth-friendly scheme for attracting youth to cooperative business ventures. It has created a dedicated fund with liberal features enabling youth to avail the scheme.

India's first indigenous semiconductor chips

- ❖ India's first Indigenous Semiconductor Chips by Bengaluru based semiconductor company "SIGNALCHIP" for 4G/LTE and 5G NR MODEMs was unveiled in New Delhi.

SHREYAS

- ❖ The Minister for Human Resources Development, Shri Prakash Javadekar has launched the Scheme for Higher Education Youth in Apprenticeship and Skills (SHREYAS) for providing industry apprenticeship opportunities to the general graduates exiting in April 2019 through the National Apprenticeship Promotional Scheme (NAPS).
- ❖ The program aims to enhance the employability of Indian youth by providing 'on the job work exposure' and earning of stipend

Objective :

- ❖ To improve employability of students by introducing employment relevance into the learning process of the higher education system
- ❖ To forge a close functional link between education and industry/service sectors on a sustainable basis
- ❖ To provide skills which are in demand, to the students in a dynamic manner
- ❖ To establish an 'earn while you learn' system into higher education
- ❖ To help business/industry in securing good quality manpower
- ❖ To link student community with employment facilitating efforts of the Government