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CITIZENSHIP AMENDMENT BILL:

- ❖ The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, as reported by Joint Parliamentary Committee, was passed in Lok Sabha.
- ❖ The Bill amends the Citizenship Act, 1955 to make illegal migrants who are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, eligible for citizenship.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF JOINT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE REPORT:

- ❖ The Committee states that the Bill does not violate Article 14 (the right to equality) and Article 25 (the right to freedom of religion).
- ❖ The Bill states that the central government may cancel registration of Overseas Citizens of India (OCIs) if the OCI has violated any law in force.
- ❖ The Committee recommends that the Bill should state that the registration for OCI may be cancelled if the OCI violates the Citizenship Act or other laws, as may be notified by the central government

A.P. UNVEILS SECOND LARGEST ROCK ART TROVE

Petroglyphs in Andhra pradesh:

- ❖ About 80 petroglyphs, has been discovered at MekalaBenchi, near Aspari, in Kurnool district.
- ❖ These petroglyphs, or rock carvings, underscore Kurnool importance as a major site of Neolithic settlements in south India.
- ❖ Kandanati, with 200 petroglyphs, is also in Kurnool district - carvings range from the prehistoric to the historic period While MekalaBenchi has rock carvings dating back from the Neolithic to the Megalithic period

CENTRE EXTENDS AFSPA IN NAGALAND

Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA):

- ❖ The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act-(AFSPA) was **passed on September 11, 1958** to help the army in tackling the disturbed areas of the Northeast India. AFSPA was implemented in the Kashmir amid increase in the insurgency in 1990.
- ❖ AFSPA is a law which gives immense powers to armed forces to maintain the rule of law in the “**disturbed areas**”.
- ❖ Under this law the armed forces have the authority to prohibit gathering of five or more persons in an area.
- ❖ In some cases the forces can open fire on the disturbing factors after giving due warning if found any suspicious person.
- ❖ The ASPA was first applied to the Seven Sister States of North East India, including Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland, on 1 September, 1958, to stop the North Eastern States seceding from the Indian Union.

Feature of AFSPA:

- ❖ When differences in the communities arise on the basis of race, religion, language, region and caste and anarchic situation arises then the state or central government is entitled to declare that area as "Disturbed Area Act".
- ❖ AFSPA is levied only in those areas which have been declared as disturbed areas. Army and armed forces are sent in the area only after the implementation of this law.
- ❖ As per the **Section (3)** of the AFSPA, it is **mandatory to seek the opinion of the state government that whether a area is disturbed or not**. if a area is declared as the disturbed area ,it will be under the control of special forces for **at least 3 months**.

SPACESHIP ZOOMS TOWARDS DISTANT MYSTERIOUS WORLD

- ❖ On January 1, NASA’s New Horizons spacecraft became the first explorer to fly past the mysterious object- Ultima Thule, located some 4 billion miles from Earth.
- ❖ This is a historic flyby of the farthest, and quite possibly the oldest, cosmic body ever explored by humankind

New Horizon:

- ❖ New Horizons launched on Jan. 19, 2006
- ❖ The primary mission is to perform a flyby study of the Pluto system.
- ❖ The secondary mission to fly by and study one or more other Kuiper belt objects (KBOs).
- ❖ Significance: It will help us answer basic questions about the surface properties, geology, interior makeup and atmospheres on these bodies.

Kuiper Belt:

- ❖ Kuiper belt is a region of the solar system beyond the planets, extending from the orbit of Neptune. It consist mainly small bodies or remnants from the solar system's formation.
- ❖ It is similar to the asteroid belt, although it is far larger 20 times as wide and 200 times as massive.
- ❖ The Kuiper belt objects (KBO) are composed largely of frozen volatiles (termed 'ices'), such as methane, ammonia and water.
- ❖ Kuiper belt is home to at least three dwarf planets Pluto, Haumea and Makemake.
- ❖ Pluto, discovered in 1930, is considered its largest member.

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE IRKED BY STATES' INSENSITIVITY TO WESTERN GHATS

- ❖ Parliamentary committee said, Over 56,000 kilometres of ecologically sensitive areas (ESA) in the Western Ghats could not be earmarked as 'no-go' zones due to State governments' 'insensitivity'.
- ❖ The panel has urged the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change to constitute a committee to address the issues and grievances of local people
- ❖ The panel had examined issues regarding the categorisation of the Western Ghats as ESA as per the recommendations of two committees led by **MadhavGadgil and K. Kasturirangan**.
- ❖ The panel was asked to make an assessment of the ecology and biodiversity of the Western Ghats and suggest measures to conserve, protect and rejuvenate the entire range that stretches to over 1500 km along the coast, with its footprints in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu.
- ❖ 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.

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

Kasturirangan Committee:

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Instead of the total area of Western Ghats, only 37% (i.e. 60,000 sq. km.) of the total area be brought under ESA under Kasturirangan report.
- ❖ A complete ban on mining, quarrying and sand mining in ESA
- ❖ Distinguished between cultural (58% occupied in the Western Ghats by it like human settlements, agricultural fields and plantations) and natural landscape (90% of it should come under ESA according to the committee).
- ❖ Current mining areas in the ESA should be phased out within the next five years, or at the time of expiry of mining lease, whichever is earlier.
- ❖ No thermal power be allowed and hydropower projects are allowed only after detailed study.
- ❖ Red industries i.e. which are highly polluting be strictly banned in these areas.
- ❖ Kasturirangan report on the Western Ghats has made several pro-farmer recommendations, including the exclusion of inhabited regions and plantations from the purview of ecologically sensitive areas (ESA)

ISRO LAUNCHES SAMWAD WITH STUDENTS ON NEW YEAR DAY

- ❖ As part of the enhanced outreach programme of Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), a new platform named “Samwad with Students” (SwS) was launched in Bengaluru.

Aim:

- ❖ ISRO aims to constantly engage youngsters across India in activities concerning space science to capture their scientific temperament.

PLAN TO HAVE SPECIFIC NAMES ON ARUNACHAL ST LIST CLEARED

- ❖ The Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved the Home Ministry’s proposal to replace the generic term ‘any Naga tribes’ with the specific names of the tribes that would qualify for recognition as Scheduled Tribes in Arunachal Pradesh.

Changes made in list of Scheduled Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh are:

- ❖ Deletion of Abor – Removal of duplication
- ❖ Replace Khampti – There is no tribe called ‘Khampti’
- ❖ Inclusion of Mishmi-Kaman, Idu and Tاراon – Existing entry is only of ‘Mishmi’.
- ❖ Inclusion of Monpa, Memba, Sartang, Wancho – Existing entry is of ‘Any Naga Tribes’. These are reportedly the only Naga tribes in the State.
- ❖ Inclusion of Nocte, Tangsa, Tutsa, Wancho

PRADHAN MANTRI – JAN AROGYAYOJANA

PM-JAY:

- ❖ PM-JAY, is being described as the world’s largest health insurance scheme. It is a cashless and paperless access to health services up to Rs. 5 lakhs per year to poor and vulnerable people identified as per the socio economic caste census.

Features :

- ❖ **Easy access to medical treatment** – With the implementation of this project, poor people will receive free medical treatment.

- ❖ **Medical insurance amount** – Under this scheme, all applicants will be able to attain a medical insurance scheme that amounts to a whopping 5 lakhs. This amount is for one financial year.
- ❖ **Number of beneficiaries** – This scheme offers this cashless treatment and medical insurance benefits to as many as 10.74 individuals. Only those people will be able to apply who have their names registered in the SECC-2011 Data list.
- ❖ **Implementation in all areas**– The scheme will be implemented in all parts of the nation.
- ❖ **Flexibility of implementation** – The central government has highlighted some implementation methods for easy of operations. Each state will be able to choose the implementation mode that suits its needs.
- ❖ **For both villages and cities** – People, living in rural areas as well as cities will be able to enroll for this scheme as long as they fulfill other eligibility criteria. 85% and 60% beneficiaries have been identified from villages and urban settlements respectively.
- ❖ **Listed hospitals only** – The cashless and paperless treatment will be available only if the patients get admission in empaneled hospitals.

RASHTRIYAYUVASASHAKTIKARANKARYAKRAM SCHEME:

- ❖ The RashtriyaYuvaSashaktikaranKaryakram Scheme is an ongoing Central Sector Scheme of the Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports and has been continuing since 12th Five Year Plan.
- ❖ The Scheme aims to develop the personality and leadership qualities of the youth and to engage them in nation building activities.
- ❖ The Scheme beneficiaries are the youth in the age-group of 15-29 years, in line with the definition of 'youth' in the National Youth Policy, 2014.
- ❖ In case of programme components specifically meant for the adolescents, the age-group is 10-19 years.
- ❖ During 12th FYP period, in rationalization exercise undertaken in consultation with Ministry of Finance and NITI Aayog, the eight schemes were brought under the umbrella scheme of RashtriyaYuvaSashaktikaranKaryakram as sub-schemes

Eight sub-schemes under Rashtriya Yuva Sashaktikaran Karyakram:

- ❖ Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS);
- ❖ National Youth Corps (NYC);
- ❖ National Programme for Youth & Adolescent Development (NPYAD);
- ❖ International Cooperation;
- ❖ Youth Hostels (YH);
- ❖ Assistance to Scouting & Guiding Organizations;
- ❖ National Discipline Scheme (NDS); and
- ❖ National Young Leaders Programme (NYLP).

LIGHT COMBAT AIRCRAFT (LCA):

- ❖ The LCA is being designed and developed by the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) in Bangalore.
- ❖ The Centre for Military Airworthiness and Certification (CEMILAC) has given the green signal to start manufacturing of Tejas Mk1 under Final Operational Clearance (FOC) configuration
- ❖ The IAF has asked HAL to make 40 LCA aircraft. Of this, 20 will be in the advanced 'FOC' (final operational clearance) format. Another 20 are in the earlier IOC (initial operational clearance) version.
- ❖ The FOC tag signals that the novice LCA is fully equipped and fit for battle. It adds many features over the IOC version, which Tejas achieved in December 2013.

SWACHH BHARAT MISSION:

- ❖ To accelerate the efforts to achieve universal sanitation coverage and to put focus on sanitation, the Prime Minister of India launched the Swachh Bharat Mission on 2nd October, 2014.
- ❖ Two Sub-Missions,
 - The Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) and
 - The Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban).
- ❖ Together, they aim to achieve Swachh Bharat by 2019, as a fitting tribute to Mahatma Gandhi on his 150th Birth Anniversary.

Vision:

- ❖ The aim of Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) is to achieve a clean and Open Defecation Free (ODF) India by 2nd October, 2019

Objective:

- ❖ To bring about an improvement in the general quality of life in the rural areas, by promoting cleanliness, hygiene and eliminating open defecation.
- ❖ To accelerate sanitation coverage in rural areas to achieve the vision of Swachh Bharat by 2nd October 2019.
- ❖ To motivate communities to adopt sustainable sanitation practices and facilities through awareness creation and health education.
- ❖ To encourage cost effective and appropriate technologies for ecologically safe and sustainable sanitation.
- ❖ To develop, wherever required, community managed sanitation systems focusing on scientific Solid & Liquid Waste Management systems for overall cleanliness in the rural areas.
- ❖ To create significant positive impact on gender and promote social inclusion by improving sanitation especially in marginalized communities

PM INAUGURATES INTEGRATED CHECK POST AT MOREH

Context:

- ❖ Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday inaugurated eight key development projects and laid the foundation stones for four schemes in Manipur.

More about the news:

- ❖ The Prime Minister Narendra Modi, inaugurated the Integrated Check Post at Moreh.
- ❖ He also inaugurated the Dolaithabi Barrage Project, the FCI Food Storage Godown at Sawombung, and projects related to water supply and tourism.

Integrated check post:

- ❖ An ICP not only provides various services under one roof but is also equipped with cargo process building, cargo inspection sheds, warehouse, cold storage, currency exchange counters, Internet hubs, clearing agents, banks, vehicle scanners, isolation bay and parking.

- ❖ India's first ICP was at Attari border, Amritsar with Pakistan. Second one was opened at Bangladesh border at Agartala in 2013.

INTELLECTUALLY CHALLENGED PERSONS HAVE RIGHT TO LIVE WITH DIGNITY, SAYS SC JUDGE

- ❖ The Court said, This is not only inhuman and violative of rights of such persons under Article 21 of the Constitution of India, as even a person suffering from mental disability is still a human being and his dignity cannot be violated

MGNREGA:

- ❖ The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is a employment guarantee act
- ❖ It was introduced in 2005 through the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005.
- ❖ In 2010, NREGA renamed as MGNREGA

Aim:

- ❖ To enhance livelihood security of household in rural areas of India

Objective:

- ❖ To provide guaranteed **100 days of wage employment** per year to each rural household
- ❖ Creation of durable rural assets
- ❖ Social inclusion of women, SCs and STs
- ❖ Strengthen the Panchayati Raj Institutions

Coverage:

- ❖ The Act currently covers all districts with the **exception of those that have a 100% urban population.**

Features:

- ❖ **Demand driven scheme:** Worker to be hired when he demands and not when the Government wants it.
- ❖ Gram Panchayat is mandated to provide employment with 15 days of work application, failing which worker is entitled to unemployment allowance

- ❖ Payment of wages within 15 days of completion of work, failing which worker is entitled to delay compensation of 0.05%/ day of wages earned
- ❖ Minimum one-third of the workers should be women
- ❖ Wages to be paid according to the Minimum Wages Act 1948 for agricultural labourers in the State
- ❖ Social Audit to be done by Gram Sabha

Polavaram project set to create Guinness record

- ❖ The Polavaram Project in Andhra Pradesh is going to set a global record on Monday and enter into Guinness Book of World Record by completing 28000 to 30000 cubic metres of concrete works in 24 hours

Polavaram Project:

- ❖ Polavaram Project is a multi-purpose irrigation project.
- ❖ The Polavaram project was accorded national status in 2014 in the Andhra Pradesh Bifurcation Act and its design was changed.
- ❖ The dam across the Godavari River is under construction located in West Godavari District and East Godavari District in Andhra Pradesh state and its reservoir spreads in parts of Chhattisgarh and Orissa States also.
- ❖ The project is multipurpose major terminal reservoir project on river Godavari for development of Irrigation, Hydropower and drinking water facilities to East Godavari, Visakhapatnam, West Godavari and Krishna districts of Andhra Pradesh.
- ❖ The project is likely to displace over 1.88 lakh people across 222 villages and so far, 1,730 persons in six villages have been rehabilitated by the government.

NATIONAL POLICY ON RARE DISEASES:

National Policy on Rare Diseases was introduced in 2017

- ❖ It provided for corpus fund of 100 Crores at Central and State Level for part funding treatment of rare diseases,
- ❖ Setting up of a Central Technical Committee (CTC) and individual State Technical Committees (STCs) to ease the process of patient applications,
- ❖ Encouraging funding support from public sector undertakings (PSUs)

Gaps In the National Policy on Rare Diseases:

- ❖ Policy is silent on a definition of rare diseases – India does not have a definition for rare diseases. The new policy does not define this either, leaving it unresolved and saying
- ❖ No Corpus fund – Though the corpus fund of 100 Crores was provided in the affidavit, no such corpus was created under National Health Mission
- ❖ Many of the states in India, till now, do not know about the national policy or have the clarity on its implementation
- ❖ There is no clarification as to whether the financial help for treatment would only be provided for BPL patients or would also include APL patients
- ❖ The implementation of the policy was mistakenly shifted from the Public Health Division to the National Health Mission, which has the mandate of only primary and secondary healthcare while rarest diseases require tertiary care.
- ❖ Due to this discrepancy, the affidavit claims, National Health Mission funds cannot be earmarked to create the Rs 100 crore corpus

NAVY TO SET UP NEW AIR BASE IN PORT BLAIR

- ❖ India has ramped up its defence installations in the Andaman and Nicobar islands near the Strait of Malacca through which 70 percent of merchant vessels pass.
- ❖ The base INS Kohasa will give a boost to the defence.

New Air base:

- ❖ The Indian Navy will commission the new Base - **INS Kohassa** on January 24 in Shibpur area of North Andaman of the Andaman and Nicobar group of Islands.
- ❖ This will be India's fourth air base and the third naval air facility in the archipelago

VVPAT:

- ❖ The Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail is a method that provides feedback to voters.
- ❖ It is an independent verification printer machine and is attached to electronic voting machines.
- ❖ It allows voters to verify if their vote has gone to the intended candidate.

How do VVPAT machines work?

- ❖ When a voter presses a button in the EVM, a paper slip is printed through the VVPAT.
- ❖ The slip contains the poll symbol and name of the candidate.
- ❖ It allows the voter to verify his/her choice. After being visible to the voter from a glass case in the VVPAT for seven seconds, the ballot slip will be cut and dropped into the drop box in the VVPAT machine and a beep will be heard.
- ❖ VVPAT machines can be accessed by polling officers only.
- ❖ VVPAT is a machine which dispenses a slip with the symbol of the party for which a person has voted for. The slip dropped in a box but the voter cannot take it home.

Advantages of VVPAT:

- ❖ Enables to verify vote: Instant feedback to voter that vote polled has been allocated to the intended candidate
- ❖ Enables authorities to count the votes manually if there is a dispute in the electronically polled votes
- ❖ Operates under a Direct Recording Election system (DRE) which detects fraud and existent malfunctions
- ❖ Will ensure greater transparency in voting process
- ❖ Gives both the voters and political parties an assurance

SC shocked as Section 66A of IT Act is still invoked

- ❖ **Section 66A:** defines the punishment for sending “offensive” messages through a computer or any other communication device like a mobile phone or tablet and a conviction of it can fetch a maximum three years of jail and a fine

10% QUOTA FOR THE POOR GETS LS APPROVAL

Context:

- ❖ The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Fourth Amendment) Bill, 2019 was passed in the loksabha on 8 January 2019.

One Hundred and Twenty-Fourth Amendment Bill :

- ❖ The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Fourth Amendment) Bill, 2019 was introduced in Lok Sabha by the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Mr. Thaawar Chand Gehlot on January 8, 2019.
- ❖ The Bill seeks to provide for the advancement of “economically weaker sections” of citizens.

Key highlights:

- ❖ The Bill seeks to amend Article 15 to additionally permit the government to provide for the advancement of “economically weaker sections”.
- ❖ Up to 10% of seats may be reserved for such sections for admission in educational institutions.
- ❖ The Bill seeks to amend Article 16 to permit the government to reserve up to 10% of all posts for the “economically weaker sections” of citizens.
- ❖ The reservation of up to 10% for “economically weaker sections” in educational institutions and public employment will be in addition to the existing reservation.
- ❖ The central government will notify the “economically weaker sections” of citizens on the basis of family income and other indicators of economic disadvantage.

Who all are eligible?

- ❖ People who earn less than Rs 8 lakh annually
- ❖ People who have agricultural land below five acres
- ❖ For availing the quota, a residential house should be below 1000 sqft
- ❖ The residential plot should be below 100 yards in notified municipality
- ❖ The residential plot below 200 yards should be in a non-notified municipality area

Process to be followed to pass the bill:

- ❖ Constitution Amendment is required to add economic backwardness as a ground for reservations because the constitution does not provide for reservation on the ground of economic conditions and Bill have to be passed by both Houses of Parliament by a special majority of two-thirds of the members present and voting, which should not be less than one-half of the total strength of the House.
- ❖ If it is not passed by both the Houses within the term of this Lok Sabha, it will lapse. The Bill will also have to be ratified by at least half the State Assemblies.

Critical Analysis of 10% quota for Economically Backward class:

- ❖ There are poor people among upper castes who need help. This should be appropriate and constitutionally sustainable.
- ❖ Our constitution introduced reservation and other social justice measures for those who were excluded collectively from education and entry into services of the state and better opportunities because of the caste system.
- ❖ These were the victims of untouchability i.e. scheduled castes and schedule tribes. They were socially and educationally backward classes. This was the basic structure. It was not a programme to eliminate poverty. It was part of a national enterprise to remove the inequalities created by the caste system.
- ❖ Now, there are poor people in all castes. They are poor Brahmins, poor Thakurs, poor Syeds and poor Baniyas who need help to complete their education.
- ❖ So, they need comprehensive scholarship, education loans, skill development assistance. They are economically backward, not socially. They require only economic support, not reservation.

Implications:

- ❖ If the EWS is treated as a category just like the SC, ST and OBC, a large chunk of general category candidates will apply for just 10% seats and the cut-offs can rise.
- ❖ Candidates who are above the general cut-off may still occupy this 10% quota to get a better service or cadre for example in UPSC.

SCHEDULE TRIBE:

- ❖ A tribe is a social division in a traditional society consisting of families linked by social, economic, religious, or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect.
- ❖ A tribe possesses certain qualities and characteristics that make it a unique cultural, social, and political entity.
- ❖ Constitution of India has recognized tribal communities in India under ‘Schedule 5’ of the constitution. Hence the tribes recognized by the Constitution are known as ‘ Scheduled Tribes’.
- ❖ The Constitution of India in Article 366 (25) prescribe that the Scheduled Tribes means such tribes or tribal communities as are deemed under Article 342 of the Constitution to be Scheduled Tribes.

Criteria for specification of a community as a Scheduled Tribe:

- ❖ While the Constitution is silent about the criteria for specification of a community as a Scheduled Tribe.
 - Primitiveness,
 - geographical isolation,
 - shyness and social, educational & economic backwardness
 - Distinctive culture
- ❖ Due to these reasons are the traits that distinguish Scheduled Tribe communities of our country from other communities.
- ❖ It takes into account the definitions of tribal Communities adopted in the 1931 Census.
- ❖ These facts are the basis for the provision in Article 342(1) which mandates to specify the tribes or tribal communities or part of or groups within tribes or tribal communities as Scheduled Tribe in relation to that State or Union Territory as the case may be.

Parliament passes Bill to provide 10% quota for poor

Economic Reservation:

- ❖ Economic reservation in jobs and education is proposed to be provided by inserting clause(6) in Articles 15 and 16 of the Constitution.
- ❖ The proposed Article 15(6) enables State to make special provisions for advancement of any economically weaker section of citizens, including reservations in educational institutions.

It states that such reservation can be made in any educational institution, including private institutions, whether aided or unaided, except minority educational institutions covered under Article 30(1). It further states that the upper limit of reservation will be ten percent, which will be in addition to the existing reservations.

- ❖ The proposed Article 16(6) enables State to make provision for reservation in appointments, in addition to the existing reservations, subject to a maximum of ten percent.

Present Reservation:

- ❖ At present, reservations account for a total of 49.5%, with 15% Schedule Caste, 7.5% Schedule Tribe and 27% Other Backward Classes respectively.

WHAT A HARAPPAN GRAVE SAYS ABOUT MARRIAGE

Context:

- ❖ A team of Indian and South Korean researchers have excavated the skeletal remains of the couple from a site where nine graves were unearthed in one trench.
- ❖ First anthropologically confirmed joint burial of a couple has been excavated in a Harappan cemetery

More about the news:

- ❖ This is the first couple's grave that archaeologists have confirmed in a Harappan cemetery. Although many Harappan settlements and cemeteries have been investigated, no couple burials have been reported till date.
- ❖ The 'couple's grave' was found in the Harappan settlements excavated at Rakhigarhi in Haryana, some 150 km northwest of Delhi
- ❖ Archaeologists say that the evidence points to the fact that the couple was buried simultaneously or about at the same time following their deaths which could have occurred about 4,700 years ago.

Significance of the Excavation:

- ❖ According to archaeologist, the excavation suggests that marriage as an institution could have originated in India from the Harappan civilization

Burial Pattern:

- ❖ Broadly, three types of graves have been discovered at Harappan sites.
- ❖ In the most common type, known as the primary grave, archaeologists have found full-body remains of the person placed inside a pit.
- ❖ Secondary pits were those that contained partial remains of a few bones placed in the pit.
- ❖ In the third type of the grave, skeletal remains were completely missing in the burial pit.
- ❖ Instead, there were some accessories, presumably the belongings of the deceased person.
- ❖ Perhaps the body could not be ever retrieved, possibly in cases of deaths caused by wild animals or during wars

Web- Wonder Women” Campaign

- ❖ \ The Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, has launched an online campaign, ‘#www : **Web- WonderWomen**’.

SWADESHDARSHAN SCHEME:

- ❖ Ministry of Tourism (MoT) launched the SwadeshDarshan Scheme (Central Sector Scheme)– for integrated development of theme based tourist circuits in the country in 2014-15.
- ❖ This scheme is envisioned to synergise with other Government of India schemes like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Skill India, Make in India etc.

Objective:

- ❖ The scheme was introduced by the cabinet ministry and ministry of tourism of India to develop the theme based tourism in the country.
- ❖ The tourists or visitors will get an opportunity to visit the specific tourist circuit in a single tour. The tourists can take the pleasure of thematic tourism under this scheme.
- ❖ As the scheme promotes Indian tourism and development of various pilgrimage sites, the scheme also
- ❖ encourages the local inhabitants to be aware of the issue of maintenance of the city. The local amenities like roads, water, food and other things should be maintained properly to attract more tourists.
- ❖ The scheme promotes the Indian tourism and also aims to attract global visitors by

developing the tourists' spots and circuits. So that people can be motivated to travel from one spot to another in a single tour.

- ❖ It accelerates the employment generation in the nation on local basis. People who are engaged in city development will join hands with the local workers to make thing easier for the visitors.

Key Features:

- ❖ The scheme was completely funded by the central government of India. There are 13 cities that are under consideration of development. These 13 cities are all pilgrimage sites.
- ❖ There are 13 tourist circuits that are proposed and started under the scheme. Under these 13 circuits there are many cities and sites are added for the visitors to get down there and enjoy their holiday.
- ❖ The scheme is a joint venture by the central government and ministry of tourism. By launching the scheme both the ministry will be able to develop the heritage cities of the nation and conserve them for the tourists from across the globe.

Tourist circuit and SwadeshDarshan Scheme:

- ❖ By tourist circuit it means that a bunch of connected places that can be visited in a single tour. It is more like a Golden Triangle in India.
- ❖ There are 13 tourists' circuits that have been identified under this scheme.circuits are called:
- ❖ Buddhist Circuit
- ❖ Coastal Circuit
- ❖ Krishna Circuit
- ❖ Ramayana Circuit
- ❖ Desert Circuit
- ❖ Spiritual Circuit
- ❖ North-East Circuit
- ❖ Himalayan Circuit
- ❖ Heritage Circuit
- ❖ Tribal Circuit
- ❖ Rural Circuit
- ❖ Eco Circuit

- ❖ Wildlife Circuit

GST COUNCIL:

- ❖ **Goods & Services Tax Council** is a **constitutional body** for making recommendations to the Union and State Government on issues related to Goods and Service Tax.
- ❖ Creation of the GST Council as per Article 279A of One Hundred and First Amendment Act.
- ❖ As per Article 279A (1) of the amended Constitution, the GST Council has to be constituted by the President within 60 days of the commencement of Article 279A.
- ❖ As per Article 279A GST Council which will be a joint forum of the Centre and the States, shall consist of the following members
 - Union Finance Minister - chairman
 - Union Minister of State in charge of Revenue or Finance - Member
 - Minister in charge of Finance or Taxation or any other Minister nominated by each State Government - Member
- ❖ Article 279A (4) - Council will make recommendations to the Union and the States on important issues related to GST, like the goods and services that may be subjected or exempted from GST, model GST Laws, principles that govern Place of Supply, threshold limits, GST rates including the floor rates with bands, special rates for raising additional resources during natural calamities/disasters, special provisions for certain States, etc.

SIX STATES, CENTRE SIGN PACT ON RENUKA MULTIPURPOSE PROJECT

The Renuka Multipurpose Dam Project:

- ❖ The Renuka dam project has been conceived as a storage project on the Giririver (a tributary of the Yamuna) in Sirmaur district of Himachal Pradesh.
- ❖ The project envisages making a 148-metre-high dam for supplying water to Delhi and other basin States. It will also generate 40 MW of power.
- ❖ After the construction of the dam, the flow of the Giririver will increase by about 110%, which will help meet the drinking water needs of Delhi and other basin States.

- ❖ Water from the Renuka dam will be used by U.P., Haryana and National Capital Territory of Delhi from Hathnikund barrage, by the NCT of Delhi from Wazirabad barrage and by U.P., Haryana and Rajasthan from the Okhla barrage.
- ❖ The origins of the project in fact go back to May 1994, when the governments of Himachal Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) for the utilisation and allocation of the waters of the upper Yamuna River which included the Renuka storage dam to be constructed in Sirmour district of HP.

SC LIFTS STAY ON STALLED CHARDHAM PROJECTS

Chat Dam project:

- ❖ The project involves developing and widening 900-km of national highways connecting the holy Hindu pilgrimage sites of; Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri at an estimated cost of Rs.12,000crores.
- ❖ The highway will be called **Char DhamMahamarg**(Char Dham Highway) and the highway construction project will be called as **Char DhamMahamargVikasPariyojana** (Char Dham Highway Development Project).
- ❖ The roads will be widened from 12m to 24m and the project will involve construction of tunnels, bypasses, bridges, subways and viaducts.

ISRO CRANKS UP GAGANYAAN PROJECT

- ❖ The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has set up a Human Space Flight Centre to implement Gaganyaan Project

More about the news:

- ❖ The Centre will be in charge of all human-related programme at the ISRO, including the **Gaganyaan project**
- ❖ Scientist **Unnikrishnan Nair** has been named director of the centre. He had earlier led ISRO's Advanced Space Transportation Programme
- ❖ The **project director for Gaganyaan will be R Hutton**, who is now project director for the PSLV program

Gaganyaan:

- ❖ Gaganyaan is an Indian crewed orbital spacecraft intended to be the basis of the Indian

human spaceflight program.

- ❖ The spacecraft is being designed to carry three people, and a planned upgraded version will be equipped with rendezvous and docking capability.
- ❖ In its maiden crewed mission, Indian Space Research Organization's largely autonomous 3.7-tonne capsule will orbit the Earth at 400 km (250 mi) altitude for up to seven days with a three-person crew on board.
- ❖ The crewed vehicle is planned to be launched on ISRO's GSLV Mk III in 2022. This HAL-manufactured crew module had its first uncrewed experimental flight in 2014.

Future Launch:

- ❖ ISRO also announced the launch of India's second lunar mission **Chandrayaan-2** in in mid-April 2019
 - Chandrayaan-2 spacecraft, will be launched on board the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) Mk-3.
- ❖ Chandrayaan 2 will orbit around the moon to study its conditions and collect data of its topography, mineralogy and exosphere

FARMERS UNDER KALIA SCHEME TO GET MONEY BY JANUARY 26

Context:

- ❖ Odisha Government on Saturday announced that the first phase financial aid under the newly launched Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) scheme will be provided by January 26.

KALIA Scheme:

- ❖ KALIA scheme stands for "**Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation**".
- ❖ The Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) scheme would benefit about 92% of the farmers in the state and the government has earmarked Rs 10,180 crore for the plan in 3 years.

- ❖ Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) scheme has been initiated by the State Government to provide financial assistance for farmers before the commencement of the sowing season.

Who is eligible under the scheme:

- ❖ Small and Marginal Farmers are eligible to get benefit under support to cultivators for cultivation.
- ❖ Landless agricultural households are eligible to get livelihood support under the scheme.
- ❖ Vulnerable agricultural household covering vulnerable cultivators/landless agricultural labourers are eligible to get financial assistance under the KALIA scheme.
- ❖ Life Insurance Support to cultivators and Landless agricultural labourers as well as the interest free crop loan component are meant for all category of beneficiary under KALIA scheme.

Key features of the Scheme:

- ❖ **Assistance for cultivation:** Financial assistance of Rs 25,000 per farm family over five seasons will be provided to small and marginal farmers so that farmers can purchase inputs like seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and use assistance towards labour and other investments from 2018-19 to 2021-22.
- ❖ **Assistance for Livelihood:** Financial Assistance of Rs 12,500 will be provided to each landless Agricultural Household for agriculture allied activities like for small goat rearing unit, mini-layer unit, duckery units, fishery kits for fisherman, mushroom cultivation and bee-keeping, etc.
- ❖ **Assistance for vulnerable agricultural household:** Vulnerable cultivators and landless agricultural labourers will get financial assistance of Rs 10,000 per family per year to enable them to take care of their sustenance.
 - The vulnerable cultivator and landless agricultural labourers those who are in old age, having disability or disease and are vulnerable for any other reason.
- ❖ **Life insurance for cultivators & landless agricultural labourers:** Life insurance cover of Rs 2 lakh at a very nominal premium of Rs 330/ will be provided to all savings bank account holder of age between 18-50 years.

- Odisha government will bear farmers' share of the annual premium of Rs 165. Personal accident cover of Rs 2 lakh at a very nominal annual premium of Rs 12 for all savings bank account holder aged between 18-50 years.
- Out of Rs 12 towards premium, Rs 6 is the farmers' share, which will be borne by the state government. A beneficiary whose age is between 51-70 years, the entire amount of Rs 12 towards annual premium will be borne by the government.
- ❖ **Interest-free crop loan:** Vulnerable landless labourers, cultivators and agricultural families identified by Gram Panchayats will be provided with crop loans up to Rs 50,000 made available at 0% interest

QUOTA BILL GETS PRESIDENT'S ASSENT, BECOMES LAW

Context:

- ❖ The President of India Ram Nath Kovind on Saturday gave his assent to The Constitution (**One Hundred and Third Amendment**) which aims to provide reservation in public employment and higher education for economically weaker sections.

More about the news:

- ❖ The 10 per cent quota is in addition to the 22.5 per cent reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and 27 per cent reservation for castes identified as the Other Backward Classes (OBC).
- ❖ The fresh provision does not tinker with the existing 49.5 per cent of this quota.
- ❖ With the new 10 per cent quota becoming a law with the President's assent, the total reservation in jobs and education now stands at 59.5 per cent.

Background:

- ❖ On Wednesday, the Rajya Sabha had passed the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Fourth Amendment) Bill 2019, which envisages giving up to 10% quota to economically weaker section.
- ❖ The Lok Sabha had passed the bill, the previous day, with 323 out of 326 MPs present voting in its favour.
- ❖ Within hours of the Parliament passing the amendment, an NGO named "Youth For Equality", filed a petition challenging it before the Supreme Court contending that the amendment violates the "basic structure" of the Constitution.

- Referring to the nine judges bench decision of the Supreme Court in Indira Sawhney case (1992), the petition states that reservation cannot be given on the basis of economic criteria.

AMRUT:

- ❖ AMRUT stands for Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation.
- ❖ The government launched AMRUT in 2015 in 500 mission cities.
- ❖ The mission period is up to March, 2020.

Aim:

- ❖ providing basic civic amenities like water supply, sewerage, urban transport, parks as to improve the quality of life for all especially the poor and the disadvantaged.

Focus:

- ❖ The focus of the Mission is on infrastructure creation that has a direct link to provision of better services to the citizens.

Purpose of the Mission:

- ensure that every household has access to a tap with assured supply of water and a sewerage connection
- increase the amenity value of cities by developing greenery and well maintained open spaces
- e.g. parks and
- reduce pollution by switching to public transport or constructing facilities for non-motorized transport
- ❖ e.g. walking and cycling

PM to release a Commemorative Coin to mark the birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh ji

Guru Gobind Singh:

- ❖ The tenth and the last Guru or Prophet-teacher of the Sikh faith
- ❖ Guru Gobind Singh has been a source of inspiration for many through his teachings and ideals.

- ❖ His notable contribution to Sikhism is the establishment of the Khalsa in 1699.
- ❖ He was educated in reading, writing, and also martial arts, archery and horse riding.
- ❖ Not only was he a brave warrior, he was also a great poet and philosopher.
- ❖ His literary contributions include the Jaap Sahib, BentiChaupai, AmritSavaiye, etc.
- ❖ He took part in many battles particularly against the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb.
- ❖ In the Battle of Anandpur (1704), the Guru lost his mother and two minor sons who were executed. His eldest sons also died in battle.

ONE STOP CENTER (OR) SAKHI CENTER:

- ❖ OSC, or Sakhicentre, is a scheme sponsored fully by the Central government under the Nirbhaya fund set up for safety of women after the gang rape of a paramedical student in December 2012 in New Delhi.
- ❖ The scheme envisages an OSC for medical, legal, psychological and police help for victims of gender-based abuse such as sexual assault or domestic violence.

Objective:

- ❖ To provide integrated support and assistance to women affected by violence, both in private and public spaces under one roof.
- ❖ To facilitate immediate, emergency and non-emergency access to a range of services including medical, legal, psychological and counselling support under one roof to fight against any forms of violence against women.

Target Group:

- ❖ The OSC will support all women including girls below 18 years of age affected by violence, irrespective of caste, class, religion, region, sexual orientation or marital status.
- ❖ For girls below 18 years of age, institutions and authorities established under Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2000 and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 will be linked with the OSC.

Services Offered:

- ❖ Emergency Response and Rescue Services
- ❖ Medical assistance
- ❖ Assistance to women in lodging FIR /NCR/DIR

- ❖ Psycho - social support/ counselling
- ❖ Legal aid and counselling
- ❖ Shelter
- ❖ Video Conferencing Facility - To facilitate speedy and hassle free police and court proceedings the OSC will provide video conferencing facility (through Skype, Google Conferencing etc.).

MEKEDATU PROJECT:

- ❖ Mekedatu, is a deep gorge situated at the confluence of the rivers Cauvery and Arkavathi, about 100 km from Bengaluru, at the Kanakapurataluk in Karnataka's Ramanagara district.
- ❖ Its primary objective is to supply drinking water to Bengaluru and recharge the groundwater table in the region.

Tamil Nadu Objection:

- ❖ Soon after the project was announced in 2013, then Tamil Nadu Government raised the objection over dam because it will affect the natural flow of the river Cauvery considerably and will severely affect the irrigation in Tamil Nadu.
- ❖ Tamil Nadu stated that the construction of a reservoir would be against the principles of federalism because in a federal structure, no upper riparian State can unilaterally interfere with the natural flow of an inter State river without the consent and concurrence of the lower riparian State
- ❖ Tamil Nadu's stand was that the project would not only impede the water available to farmers in the state but it would also go against the mandate that the total quantity of water must be for consumptive use, as prescribed by the Tribunal

PRADHAN MANTRI AWAS YOJANA (URBAN):

- ❖ The Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (Urban) Programme launched by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA)
- ❖ Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana ' is an initiative by Government of India in which affordable housing will be provided to the urban poor with a target of building 20 million affordable houses by 31 March 2022.

Aim:

- ❖ It aims to construct 1.2 crore houses and ensure “Housing for All by 2022” by providing financial assistance to the beneficiaries.
- ❖ The PMAY - U has 4 components
- ❖ In-situ Rehabilitation of existing slum dwellers using land as a resource through private participation
- ❖ Credit Linked Subsidy
- ❖ Affordable Housing in Partnership
- ❖ Subsidy for Beneficiary-led individual house construction/enhancement

UDAN SCHEME:

- ❖ UDAN or (UdeDeshkaAamNagrik) scheme was launched in n 2016.
- ❖ To **make air travel affordable** through subsidised tickets and to provide its access to smaller towns.
- ❖ It aims **to connect major cities with tier-II and tier-III cities** at a price of Rs 2,500 per one-hour flight.
- ❖ In its **first phase** in 2017, 5 airlines were mandated to fly on 128 regional routes
- ❖ In the **second phase** in 2018 15 airlines on 325 regional routes including those having chopper operations were mandated.
- ❖ The third round of bidding under the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) – UDAN for domestic routes concluded recently and 15 airlines had bid for a total 111 routes.

HALF DONE: ON THE BAN ON PLASTIC

Context:

- ❖ Puducherry will implement a ban from March 1.
- ❖ So far, 22 States and Union Territories have joined the fight *to beat the plastic pollution, announcing a ban on single-use plastics* such as carry bags, cups, plates, cutlery, straws and thermocol products.
- ❖ India won global acclaim for its “Beat Plastic Pollution” resolve declared on World Environment Day last year, under which it pledged to eliminate single-use plastic by 2022.

JUSTICES MAHESHWARI AND KHANNA MADE SC JUDGES

Collegium System:

- ❖ The Collegiums System of appointment of judges was born through “**three judgescase**” which interpreted constitutional articles on **October 28, 1998**.
- ❖ The Collegium System is a system under which appointments/elevation of judges/lawyers to Supreme Court and transfers of judges of High Courts and Apex Court are decided by a forum of the Chief Justice of India and the two chief justices of high courts and two senior judges of the Supreme Court
- ❖ There is no mention of the Collegium either in the original Constitution of India or in successive amendments.
- ❖ The collegium sends its final recommendation to the President of India for approval. The President can either accept it or reject it. In the case it is rejected, the recommendation comes back to the collegium. If the collegium reiterates its recommendation to the President, then he/she is bound by that recommendation.

CENTRAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION:

- ❖ The CBI owes its origin to the **Delhi Special Police Establishment, established in 1941**, to enquire into cases of corruption in the procurement during the Second World War.
- ❖ Later, based on the recommendations of the **Santhanam Committee on Prevention of Corruption**, CBI was established by a resolution of the **Ministry of Home Affairs**. Later, it was **transferred to the Ministry of Personnel** and now it enjoys the status of an attached office.
- ❖ The **CBI is not a statutory body**. It derives its powers from the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946. The CBI is the main investigating agency of the Central Government.
- ❖ It plays an important role in the prevention of corruption and maintaining integrity in administration. It works under the overall superintendence of Central Vigilance Commission in matters related to the **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988**.

Composition of CBI:

- ❖ The CBI is headed by a Director. He is assisted by a Special Director or an Additional

Director. Additionally, it has a number of joint directors, deputy inspector generals, superintendents of police and all other usual ranks of police personnel.

- ❖ The Director of CBI has been provided security of two-year tenure in office by the CVC Act, 2003 (VineetNarain Case). The CVC Act also provides the mechanism for the selection of the Director of CBI and other officers of the rank of SP and above in the CBI.
- ❖ The Director of the CBI is appointed by the Central Government on the recommendation of a committee consisting of the Central Vigilance Commissioner as Chairperson, the Vigilance Commissioners, the Secretary to the Government of India in-charge of the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Secretary (Coordination and Public Grievances) in the Cabinet Secretariat.

Organisation of CBI:

- ❖ At present (2013), the CBI has the following divisions:
 - ❖ Anti-Corruption Division
 - ❖ Economic Offences Division
 - ❖ Special Crimes Division
 - ❖ Policy and International Police Cooperation Division
 - ❖ Administration Division
 - ❖ Directorate of Prosecution
 - ❖ Central Forensic Science Laboratory

RIGHT OF CHILDREN TO FREE AND COMPULSORY EDUCATION (AMENDMENT) ACT, 2019

Context:

- ❖ The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Amendment) Act, 2019 which was passed by the Parliament on January 3, 2019 received the assent of the President of India on January 10, 2019.
- ❖ It has now been notified in the Gazette of India.
- ❖ The bill seeks to do away with the no-detention policy in schools.

Highlights :

- ❖ The Right to Education Act, 2009 prohibits detention of children till they complete elementary education i.e., class 8. The Bill amends this provision to state that a regular examination will be held in class 5 and class 8 at the end of every academic year.
- ❖ If a child fails the exam, he will be given additional instruction, and take a re-examination. If he fails in the re-examination, the relevant central or state government may decide to allow schools to detain the child.
- ❖ Provisions of the Bill regarding assessment and detention are at variance with what most states have demanded. In this context, the question is whether these decisions should be taken by Parliament or left to state legislatures.
- ❖ It is unclear as to who will conduct the examination (which may lead to detention): centre, state, or the school.

No Detention Policy:

- ❖ According to this provision “no child admitted in a school shall be held back in any class”. This translates into automatic promotions to the next class every year until Class VII. Instead of exams, schools are supposed to hold Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluations (CCE) for every child

LOKPAL AND LOKAYUKTA ACT 2013:

- ❖ The Lokpal and Lokayukta Act, 2013 seeks to provide for the establishment of Lokpal for the Union and Lokayukta for States to inquire into allegations of corruption against certain public functionaries and for related matters.
- ❖ The act extends to whole of India, including Jammu & Kashmir and is applicable to "public servants" within and outside India.
- ❖ The act mandates for creation of Lokpal for Union and Lokayukta for states.

Structure:

- ❖ The institution of Lokpal is a statutory body without any constitutional backing.
- ❖ Lokpal is a multi member body, made up of one chairperson and maximum of 8 members.
- ❖ The person who is to be appointed as the chairperson of the Lokpal should be either the former Chief Justice of India Or the former Judge of Supreme Court Or an eminent person with impeccable integrity and outstanding ability, having special knowledge and expertise

of minimum 25 years in the matters relating to anti-corruption policy, public administration, vigilance, finance including insurance and banking, law and management.

- ❖ Out of the maximum eight members, half will be judicial members. Minimum fifty per cent of the Members will be from SC / ST / OBC / Minorities and women.

The judicial member of the Lokpal should be either a former Judge of the Supreme Court or a former Chief Justice of a High Court.

The non-judicial member should be an eminent person with impeccable integrity and outstanding ability, having special knowledge and expertise of minimum 25 years in the matters relating to anti-corruption policy, public administration, vigilance, finance including insurance and banking, law and management.

- ❖ The members are **appointed by the president** on the recommendation of a selection committee.
- ❖ The **selection committee** is composed of the Prime Minister who is the Chairperson; Speaker of Lok Sabha, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha, Chief Justice of India or a Judge nominated by him / her, and One eminent jurist.

Jurisdiction of Lokpal:

- ❖ The jurisdiction of the Lokpal will include the Prime Minister except on allegations of corruption relating to international relations, security, the public order, atomic energy and space and unless a Full Bench of the Lokpal and at least two-thirds of members approve an inquiry.
- ❖ The Lokpal will also have jurisdiction over Ministers and MPs but not in the matter of anything said in Parliament or a vote given there.
- ❖ Lokpal's jurisdiction will cover all categories of public servants.
- ❖ Group A, B, C or D officers defined as such under the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 will be covered under the Lokpal but any corruption complaint against Group A and B officers, after inquiry, will come to the Lokpal.
 - However, in the case of Group C and D officers, the Chief Vigilance Commissioner will investigate and report to the Lokpal.

Powers of Lokpal:

- ❖ It has powers to superintendence over, and to give direction to CBI.
- ❖ If it has referred a case to CBI, the investigating officer in such case cannot be transferred

without approval of Lokpal.

- ❖ Powers to authorize CBI for search and seizure operations connected to such case.
- ❖ The Inquiry Wing of the Lokpal has been vested with the powers of a civil court.
- ❖ Lokpal has powers of confiscation of assets, proceeds, receipts and benefits arisen or procured by means of corruption in special circumstances
- ❖ Lokpal has the power to recommend transfer or suspension of public servant connected with allegation of corruption.
 - Lokpal has power to give directions to prevent destruction of records during preliminary inquiry.

DR. JITENDRA SINGH INAUGURATES UNNATI

UNNATI:

- ❖ UNNATI, a capacity building programme on Nanosatellite development, is an initiative by ISRO to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first United Nations conference on the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space (UNISPACE-50).
- ❖ The programme provides opportunities to the participating developing countries to strengthen in assembling, integrating and testing of Nanosatellite.
- ❖ UNNATI programme is planned to be conducted for 3 years by U.R. Rao Satellite Centre of ISRO in 3 batches and will target to benefit officials of 45 countries.

Objective:

- ❖ To offer a simplified and increased exposure to satellite fabrication technologies, as part of the UNISPACE initiative.
- ❖ To provide theoretical course on satellite technology.
- ❖ To provide intensive course on nano satellite realisation, covering mission aspects, design, fabrication, assembly, integration & testing.
- ❖ To provide hands-on training to assemble, integrate and test a low cost, modular nano satellite.

PRADHAN MANTRI ROZGAR PROTSAHAN YOJANA ACHIEVES ONE CRORE MILESTONE

Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY),

The flagship scheme of the Central Government for employment generation has crossed the milestone of one crore beneficiaries as on January 14, 2019.

Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY):

- ❖ PMRPY was announced on August 07, 2016 and is being implemented by Ministry of Labour and Employment through the Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO).
- ❖ The PMRPY Scheme aims to incentivise employers for employment generation by the Government paying the employers' EPS contribution of 8.33%, for the new employees, for the first three years of their employment and is proposed to be made applicable for unemployed persons that are semi-skilled and unskilled.

Objective:

- ❖ The Pradhan Mantri Rozgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY) is a scheme to incentivise employers registered with the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) for job creation by the Government paying the 8.33% contribution of employers to the Employee Pension Scheme (EPS) in respect of new employees having a new Universal Account Number (UAN). For the textile (apparel) sector, the Government will also be paying the 3.67% Employees Provident Fund (EPF) contribution of the eligible employer for these new employees.

Benefits:

- ❖ The employer is incentivised for increasing the employment base of workers in the establishment
- ❖ A large number of workers will find jobs in such establishments. A direct benefit is that these workers will have access to social security benefits of the organized sector.

CASSINI MISSION:

- ❖ Launched in 1997, the Cassini mission — a cooperation between NASA, the European Space Agency and the Italian Space Agency — has sent back thousands of stunning images and made numerous discoveries about the ringed planet and its moons.
- ❖ Cassini-Huygens is an unmanned spacecraft sent to the planet Saturn. Cassini is the fourth

space probe to visit Saturn and the first to enter orbit.

- ❖ Its design includes a Saturn orbiter and a lander for the moon Titan.
- ❖ The lander, called Huygens, landed on Titan in 2005.
- ❖ The spacecraft was launched on October 15, 1997. This was the first landing ever accomplished in the outer Solar Sy

SCATFORM PROJECT:

- ❖ The project is undertaken with the assistance of JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency).
- ❖ The SCATFORM project aims to address issues such as forest cover loss and forest degradation have been mainly caused by shifting cultivation, which increases soil erosion risks on hill slopes especially in upper catchment areas.
- ❖ It would be implemented mainly in upper catchments where forest degradation and soil erosion are severe and livelihood improvement needs are high. The project aims to the improve quality of forest in the catchment area by sustainable forest management, soil and moisture conservation and livelihood development.
- ❖ The activities undertaken under the project involves promotion of bamboo plantation, agroforestry based livelihood, eco-tourism development, development of value addition for bamboo and other Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) in order to create alternate livelihood opportunities for local communities.
- ❖ The 80 per cent of the cost is contributed by JICA and the rest would be funded by the state and central governments

LOKTAK LAKE:

- ❖ The Manipur government's plan to set up a bird sanctuary at the Loktaklake in Bishnupur district has met with stiff opposition from the villagers in nearby areas.
- ❖ Villagers claim fishing ban in Loktaklake will hit their livelihood
- ❖ Loktak Lake is the largest freshwater lake in Northeast India and is famous for the **phumdis** floating over it.
- ❖ Phumdis are the heterogeneous mass of vegetation, soil and organic matter at various stages of decomposition.

- ❖ **KeibulLamjao National Park** is also one of Phumdis in the lake.
- ❖ It is only floating national park in world and is last natural refuge of endangered **Sangai deer**.
- ❖ This ancient lake plays an important role in the economy of Manipur.
- ❖ It serves as a source of water for irrigation, drinking water supply and hydropower generation.
- ❖ Considering the ecological status and its biodiversity values, Loktaklake was initially designated as a wetland of international importance under the Ramsar Convention in 1990.
- ❖ Later it was also listed under the Montreux Record in 1993.
- ❖ Human activity has led to severe pressure on the lake ecosystem.

BIHAR TOP STATE IN TERMS OF GDP GROWTH IN FY18: CRISIL REPORT

Context:

- ❖ According to the report by Crisil, Bihar has been ranked the top state in terms of GSDP (Gross State Domestic Product) growth in financial year 2017-18.

GSDP Ranking:

- ❖ 12 large states have registered a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of above 6.7, which is the national average in FY18. Tamilnadu 7th

ARTICLE 35 A:

- ❖ The heading of Article 35A reads: “saving of laws with respect to permanent residents and their rights”.
- ❖ The laws granting special rights to permanent residents would not be deemed a violation of the fundamental rights of other citizens.

Arguments favour of Article 35 A:

- ❖ Article 370 (1) (d) empowers the President of India to extend with requisite exceptions and modifications the other provisions of the Indian Constitution to J&K as may be necessary.

- ❖ The Delhi Agreement of 1952 followed Article 370. According to the Clause 2 of the agreement, the State Legislature of J&K was given power to make laws for conferring special rights and privileges on the ‘state subjects’.
- ❖ Article 35A follows the Instrument of Accession and the guarantee given to the State of J&K that the State’s autonomy will not be disturbed.
- ❖ Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand and such other states also have laws which say that no outsider can buy land.

Arguments Against :

- ❖ The ‘classification’ created by Article 35A has to be tested on the principle of equality as it treats non-permanent residents of J&K as ‘second-class’ citizens.
- ❖ Such persons are not eligible for employment under the State government and are also debarred from contesting elections.
- ❖ Meritorious students are denied scholarships and they cannot even seek redress in any court of law.
- ❖ Further, the issues of refugees who migrated to J&K during Partition are still not treated as ‘State subjects’ under the J&K Constitution.
- ❖ It was inserted unconstitutionally, bypassing Article 368 which empowers only Parliament to amend the Constitution.
- ❖ The laws enacted in pursuance of Article 35A are ultra vires of the fundamental rights conferred by Part III of the Constitution, especially, and not limited to, Articles 14 (right to equality) and 21 (protection of life).

N.K. SINGH PANEL RECOMMENDATION:

- ❖ The FRBM Review Committee headed by former Revenue Secretary, NK Singh was appointed by the government to review the implementation of FRBM.
- ❖ In its report submitted in January 2017, titled, ‘The Committee in its Responsible Growth: A Debt and Fiscal Framework for 21st Century India’,
- ❖ The Committee suggested that a rule based fiscal policy by limiting government debt, fiscal deficit and revenue deficits to certain targets is good for fiscal consolidation in India.

Recommendations of N.K. Singh Panel:

- ❖ **Public debt to GDP ratio should be considered as a medium-term anchor for fiscal policy in India.**
 - The combined debt-to-GDP ratio of the centre and states should be brought down to 60 per cent by 2023 (comprising of 40 per cent for the Centre and 20% for states) as against the existing 49.4 per cent, and 21per cent respectively.
- ❖ **Fiscal deficit as the operating target:**
 - The Committee advocated fiscal deficit as the operating target to bring down public debt.
 - For fiscal consolidation, the centre should reduce its fiscal deficit from the current 3.5% (2017) to 2.5% by 2023
- ❖ **Formation of Fiscal Council to advise the government.**
 - It recommended setting up an independent Fiscal Council. The Council will provide several advisory functions.
 - It will forecast key macro variables like real and nominal GDP growth, tax buoyancy, commodity prices.
 - Similarly, it will do a monitoring role, besides advising about the use of escape clause and also specify a path of return.

ISRO'S FIRST MISSION ON 2019 TO PUT MILITARY SATELLITE MICROSAT - R IN SPACE:

Context:

- ❖ ISRO is all set to launch DRDO's Microsat R and Kalamsat on board the PSLV-C44 on January 24 from its spaceport situated in Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- ❖ The 46th flight of Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C44) will launch Microsat-R and Kalamsat

PSLV - C44:

- ❖ The PSLV-C44 is a four-stage launch vehicle which features alternating solid and liquid stages along with two strap-on configuration while it has been named PSLV-DL

- ❖ PSLV-C44 is the first mission of PSLV-DL and is a new variant of PSLV.
- ❖ The launch vehicle is the new version of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle while it will be moved to a higher circular orbit for establishing an orbital platform and carry out experiments.

Microsat - R:

Microsat-R is an small Indian earth observation satellite built for the Indian military Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO).

- ❖ The satellite has a launch mass of 740 kg.
- ❖ Earth Observing Satellite.

KalamSat:

- ❖ Kalamsat is a communication satellite with a life span of two months
- ❖ The nanosatellite is a 10cm cube weighing 1.2 kg
- ❖ The satellite cost was about Rs 12 lakh
- ❖ Kalamsat will be the first to use the rocket's fourth stage as an orbital platform. The fourth stage will be moved to higher circular orbit so as to establish an orbital platform for carrying out experiments
- ❖ It is named after former Indian president Dr APJ Abdul Kalam and was built by an Indian high school student team, led by Rifath Sharook, an 18-year-old from the Tamil Nadu town of Pallapatti
- ❖ It is the world's lightest and first ever 3D-printed satellite

INDIAN RHINO VISION-2020:

- ❖ It is a joint programme for the long-term conservation of the greater one-horned rhino in Assam.
- ❖ It has been developed and implemented by the Forest Department, Government of Assam, World Wildlife Fund (WWF) and International Rhino Foundation (IRF)
- ❖ The programme is supported by a number of organizations including US Fish and Wildlife Services (USFWS), Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) and WADWT.
- ❖ The programme aims to increase the population of the greater one-horned rhino by 3000 in new/ potential areas, all throughout the state of Assam, by the year 2020.

- ❖ As part of IRV-2020 rhino population range expansion strategy, 18 rhinos were translocated from Pobitora
- ❖ Wildlife Sanctuary and Kaziranga National Park to Manas National Park between the years 2008 and 2012.
- ❖ For a viable and stable population of greater one-horned rhino at Manas National Park, it is essential to maintain a minimum of 40 rhinos with a sex ratio of 3:1.
- ❖ The remaining rhinos required in different phases of the project will be brought from Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary and Kaziranga National Park.

Roshni App:

- ❖ The app can recognise both old and new notes and gives audio information as to which note you are holding in your hands
- ❖ The claim is that Roshni is the first Android app to successfully recognise new INR currency notes.
- ❖ This App utilises an adaptable deep learning framework, which further uses the patterns and features embedded on the notes to differentiate and determine the currency denomination
- ❖ The app can only recognise one note at a time.

INDIA UP ONE PLACE ON GLOBAL TALENT COMPETITIVENESS RANKING AT 80TH: SURVEY

- ❖ **Context:**
- ❖ At 80th rank, India moves up one position on the Global Talent Competitive Index (GTCI) 2019, according to a report released by INSEAD business school in partnership with Tata Communications and Adecco Group.

Global talent Competitive Index:

- ❖ The survey measures how countries and cities grow, attract and retain talent, ranking 125 countries and 114 cities across all groups of income and levels of development.
- ❖ **Switzerland maintains its number 1 position**, followed by Singapore and the United States.

- ❖ **China is the best performer among BRICS countries**, while India remains the laggard of this grouping.
- ❖ European countries continue to dominate the GTCI rankings, with 15 of them in the top 25.
- ❖ Latin America often leads in producing female graduates (Argentina ranks 5th on that variable).
- ❖ Efforts in education (compared to GDP per capita) are high in Africa.
- ❖ The talent gap between higher and lower-income countries has increased over the last five years

India's Stand:

- ❖ India performed better than its lower-income peers when it comes to growing talent (48th) and access to growth opportunities (41st).
- ❖ India's biggest challenge is to improve its ability to attract (95) and retain talent (96).
- ❖ There is a need to address its poor level of Internal Openness (116th) -- in particular with respect to weak gender equality and low tolerance towards minorities and immigrants and its disappointing showing in lifestyle (112th) indicators

NATIONAL GIRL CHILD DAY

❖ **Context:**

- ❖ The Women & Child Development Ministry will celebrate National Girl Child Day (NGCD) on, 24th January, 2019.
- ❖ The programme will also observe anniversary of BetiBachaoBetiPadhao (BBBP) Scheme.

Theme:- Empowering Girls for a Brighter Tomorrow

- ❖ To Generate awareness on the issue of declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and create a positive environment around valuing the girl child.

BETIBACHAOBETIPADHAO (BBBP):

- ❖ BBBP Scheme is a Central Sector Scheme with 100% financial assistance for District level component and the fund are directly released to the DC/DM's account for smooth operation of the Scheme.
- ❖ BBBP is a comprehensive programme to address the declining Child Sex Ratio (CSR) and

related issues of empowerment of women over a life-cycle continuum.

- ❖ The Child Sex Ratio (CSR), defined as number of girls per 1000 boys in the age group of 0-6 years.
- ❖ The specific objectives of the scheme include preventing gender biased sex selective elimination; ensuring survival and protection of the girl child and ensuring education and participation of the girl child.

Bandipur National Park:

- ❖ Located in Karnataka.
- ❖ Together with the adjoining Nagarhole National Park, Mudumalai National Park and Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary, it is part of the **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve making it the largest protected area in southern India and largest habitat of wild elephants in south Asia.**
- ❖ The park is flanked by the Kabiniriver in the north and the Moyarriver in the south. The Nuguriver runs through the park.
- ❖ The highest point in the park is on a hill called HimavadGopalaswamyBetta

ISRO TASTES FIRST SUCCESS OF 2019

Context:

- ❖ PSLV-C44 successfully launched Microsat-R and Kalamsat-V2
 - **PSLV C44:**
- ❖ The PSLV C44 is the first launch for the country's space agency in 2019.
- ❖ The PSLV C44 is the 46th flight of PSLV and 1st Flight of PSLV - DL with two straps on variant.
- ❖ The PSLV-C44 placed the 740-kg primary satellite Microsat-R in a 274-km polar sun synchronous orbit

Context:

- ❖ Former president Pranab Mukherjee, Bharatiya Jana Sangh leader NanajiDeshmukh and singer BhupenHazarika were conferred the country's highest civilian award Bharat Ratna.

BHARAT RATNA:

- ❖ Bharat Ratna – ‘Jewel of India’ is the highest civilian award of the country.
- ❖ It is conferred for exceptional Service to the nation in various fields such as Science arts, literature and in recognition of public service of the highest order.
- ❖ The award was established by former President of India Rajendra Prasad on 2nd January 1954.
- ❖ First Bharat Ratna was awarded to SarvepalliRadhakrishnan, Sir C.V. Raman, and Chakravarti Rajagopalachari in 1954.
- ❖ The medallion is cast in Bronze.
- ❖ The medallion is designed like the leaf of peepal tree with sunburst in the center and Bharat Ratna is engraved underneath it.
- ❖ On the backside, Indian emblem of India is embossed and SatyamevaJayate is inscribed in Devanagari script.
- ❖ The medallion is worn around the neck using white ribbon.
- ❖ The award does not carry any monetary endowment.
- ❖ The recommendations for Bharat Ratna are made by the Prime Minister to the President.
- ❖ The number of yearly awards is constrained to a maximum of three in a specific year.

RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT :

- ❖ Right to Information Act 2005 mandates timely response to citizen requests for government information.
- ❖ It is an initiative taken by Department of Personnel and Training, Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions to provide a– RTI Portal Gateway to the citizens for quick search of information on the details of first Appellate Authorities,PIOs etc.

Objective:

- ❖ The basic object of the Right to Information Act is to empower the citizens,promote transparency and accountability in the working of the Government,contain corruption, and make our democracy work for the people in real sense.
- ❖ It goes without saying that an informed citizen is better equipped to keep necessary vigil on the instruments of governance and make the government more accountable to the governed.

- ❖ The Act is a big step towards making the citizens informed about the activities of the Government

PATIENTS URGE ADOPTION OF RIGHTS CHARTER

Context:

- ❖ The Jan SwasthyaAbhiyan (JSA), a national platform working on health and healthcare services, urged the Ministry of Health to immediately implement the Charter of Patients' Rights and ensure the inclusion of the entire range of patients' rights without any dilution.

Background:

- ❖ In August 2018, the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare announced its plans to implement this Charter, which was placed in the public domain for inviting comments up to 30th September, 2018.
- ❖ Although nearly 4 months have elapsed since this declaration of intent, there seems to have been no further progress on finalisation and adoption of the charter.

Need Charter of Patients' Rights:

- ❖ There is no consolidated uniform document on patients' rights that can be followed by all states uniformly.
- ❖ Some states have adopted National Clinical Establishments Act, 2010 and certain others have enacted their own State-level legislations to regulate hospitals.
- ❖ Right to non-discrimination in medical treatment is important right. Every patient has 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.

KALIA scheme:

- ❖ KALIA scheme stands for "**Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation**".
- ❖ The Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) scheme would benefit about 92% of the farmers in the state and the government has earmarked Rs 10,180 crore for the plan in 3 years.

- ❖ Krushak Assistance for Livelihood and Income Augmentation (KALIA) scheme has been initiated by the State Government to provide financial assistance for farmers before the commencement of the sowing season

Micro plastic:

- ❖ Microplastics are plastic particles of less than 5 mm in diameter.
- ❖ They enter the environment either as primary industrial products, such as those used in scrubbers and cosmetics, or via urban waste water and broken-down elements of articles discarded by consumers.

INDIA CAN'T HANDLE MORE BIG CATS'

Context:

- ❖ The 3rd Stock Taking Conference on Tiger Conservation was inaugurated in New Delhi on 28 Jan 2019.
 - Third in a series of Stock Taking Conferences, had discussions on the status of the Global Tiger Recovery Program (GTRP) by the 13 tiger range countries besides deliberations on combating wildlife trafficking.

While conservation efforts are aimed at increasing the tiger count in India, global experts and officials in the government suggest that India must also prepare for a new challenge of breaching the limits of its management capacity.

Datas and Facts:

- ❖ India had 2,226 tigers as of 2014
- ❖ India's current capacity to host tigers ranges from 2,500-3,000 tigers.
- ❖ 25-35% of India's tigers now lived outside protected reserves.

Challenges:

- ❖ With dwindling core forests as well as the shrinking of tiger corridors
- ❖ poaching and man-animal conflict

- ❖ Recent attempts at translocating tigers to unpopulated reserves, such as Satkosia in Orissa, have ended badly, with one of the tigers dying

NATIONAL CLEAN AIR PROGRAMME:

- ❖ The Centre has launched the National clean air programme to reduce particulate matter (PM) pollution by 20-30% in at least 102 cities by 2024.
- ❖ The National Clean Air Programme is a pollution control initiative that was launched by the Ministry of Environment with the intention to cut the concentration of coarse (particulate matter of diameter 10 micrometer or less, or PM10) and fine particles (particulate matter of diameter 2.5 micrometer or less, or PM2.5) by at least 20% in the next five years, with 2017 as the base year for comparison.
- ❖ The NCAP focuses on collaborative and participatory approach covering all sources of pollution and coordination between relevant Central Ministries, State Governments, local bodies and other stakeholders.
- ❖ In order to ensure use of new technologies to combat the rising challenge of air pollution in India, a separate component on ‘Technology Assessment Cell’ has been envisaged under NCAP to evaluate the technologies for prevention, control and abatement of air pollution.”

Objectives:

- ❖ The overall objective is to augment and evolve effective ambient air quality monitoring network across the country besides ensuring comprehensive management plan for prevention, control and abatement of air pollution.

CENTRAL INFORMATION COMMISSION (CIC):

- ❖ CIC was established in 2005 by Central Government under provisions of Right to Information (RTI) Act (2005).
- ❖ The Chief Information Commissioner heads the Central Information Commission.
- ❖ The general superintendence, direction and management of affairs of Commission are vested in Chief Information Commissioner who is assisted by Information Commissioners.
- ❖ CIC hears appeals from information-seekers who have not been satisfied by the public authority, and also addresses major issues concerning the RTI Act.
- ❖ CIC submits annual report to Union government on the implementation of the provisions of

RTI Act.

- ❖ The central government in turn places this report before each house of Parliament.
- ❖ The Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners are appointed by the President on the recommendation of a committee consisting of – The Prime Minister, who shall be the Chairperson of the committee; the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha; a Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister.

Powers and Functions:

- ❖ It can order inquiry into any matter if there are reasonable grounds.
- ❖ It can secure compliance of its decisions from the public authority.
- ❖ It can recommend steps to be taken for promoting such conformity, if public authority does not conform to provisions of RTI Act.
- ❖ It receives and inquires into a complaint from
- ❖ It examines any record which is under control of the public authority and which may be withheld from it on any grounds during the enquiry. While inquiring, it has powers of civil court

ISRO LAUNCHES HUMAN SPACE FLIGHT CENTRE

Context:

- ❖ ISRO, inaugurated **Human Space Flight Centre (HSFC)** on 30th Jan'2019 at ISRO Headquarter campus in Bengaluru.

Human Space Flight center:

- ❖ HSFC shall be **responsible for implementation of GAGANYAAN Project**
- ❖ Which involves end-to-end mission planning, development of Engineering systems for crew survival in space, crew selection & training and also pursue activities for sustained human space flight missions.
- ❖ HSFC will take support of the existing ISRO Centres to implement , the first development flight of GAGANYAAN under Human Space Flight Programme
- ❖ The Centre's recently introduced '*Ujjwala Sanitary Napkins*' initiative is being seen as an attempt to counter the '*Khushi*' scheme launched by the Odisha State government.

THE 12 NATIONAL BIODIVERSITY TARGETS OF INDIA ARE:

- ❖ By 2020, a significant proportion of the country's population, especially the youth, is aware of the values of biodiversity and the steps they can take to conserve and use it sustainably.
- ❖ By 2020, values of biodiversity are integrated into national and state planning processes, development programmes and poverty alleviation strategies.
- ❖ Strategies for reducing the rate of degradation, fragmentation and loss of all natural habitats are finalized and actions put in place by 2020 for environmental amelioration and human well-being.
- ❖ By 2020, invasive alien species and pathways are identified and strategies to manage them developed so that populations of prioritized invasive alien species are managed.
- ❖ By 2020, measures are adopted for sustainable management of agriculture, forestry and fisheries.
- ❖ Ecologically representative areas under terrestrial and inland water, and also coastal and marine zones, especially those of particular importance for species, biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved effectively and equitably, based on protected area designation and management and other area-based conservation measures and are integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes, covering over 20% of the geographic area of the country, by 2020.
- ❖ By 2020, genetic diversity of cultivated plants, farm livestock, and their wild relatives, including other socio-economically as well as culturally valuable species, is maintained, and strategies have been developed and implemented for minimizing genetic erosion and safeguarding their genetic diversity.
- ❖ By 2020, ecosystem services, especially those relating to water, human health, livelihoods and well-being, are enumerated and measures to safeguard them are identified, taking into account the needs of women and local communities, particularly the poor and vulnerable sections.
- ❖ By 2015, Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits Arising from their Utilization as per the Nagoya Protocol are operational, consistent with national legislation.

- ❖ By 2020, an effective, participatory and updated national biodiversity action plan is made operational at different levels of governance.
- ❖ By 2020, national initiatives using communities' traditional knowledge relating to biodiversity are strengthened, with the view to protecting this knowledge in accordance with national legislation and international obligations.
- ❖ By 2020, opportunities to increase the availability of financial, human and technical resources to facilitate effective implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and the national targets are identified and the Strategy for Resource Mobilization is adopted.

NASA's OSIRIS-Rex spacecraft has set a new milestone in cosmic exploration by entering orbit around an asteroid, **Bennu, the smallest object ever to be circled by a human-made spaceship.**

In World Bank's Ease of Doing Business rankings portray, we rank 77th on a list of 190 economies that are doing well for businesses. India improved its rank substantially on the Ease of Doing Business index from 132 in 2016, to 100 in 2017, and further to 77 in 2018.

In the Human Development Index (HDI), compiled by the United Nations Development Program, taking parameters like education, health and income into account, India has done slightly better than the previous year as it climbed up a spot from 131 to 130 out of 189 nations.

- ❖ ***In Happiness Index***, India slipped 11 spots from 122nd rank of 2017 to become the 133rd happiest nation in the world. It is an annual publication carried out by United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network since 2012.
- ❖ ***In the Global Peace Index***, India has performed poorly and has done just a shade better than its previous performance of 137 as we rank 136 this time. Iceland, New Zealand, Austria, Denmark and Canada are the most peaceful countries, according to GPI.
- ❖ ***Global Hunger Index*** has also shown a fall in India's ranking from the past year. While India ranked 100th in a list of 119 countries last year, the 2018 performance is worse as now it is on 103rd spot. According to the report, "a ranking below 100 shows that a country's undernourishment, child wasting, child stunting, and child mortality levels are at the highest level."

- ❖ Maharashtra has completed the 100% electrification under the *central scheme of 'Saubhagya'* and has illuminated 10,93,614 homes before the stipulated deadline of December 31.
- ❖ Under the Saubhagya scheme, the target of 100% electrification of the state was to be achieved by December 31, 2018. However, the State Power Utility (SPU) achieved the target on December 27, 2018 itself.

About SAUBHAGYA Scheme:

- ❖ **Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana – 'Saubhagya'** was launched in September, 2017.
- ❖ Under Saubhagya **free electricity connections to all households (both APL and poor families) in rural areas and poor families in urban areas will be provided.**
- ❖ **Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) has been designated as nodal agency** for the Saubhagya scheme.
- ❖ The scheme aims to **achieve universal household electrification in all parts of the country.**
- ❖ As part of the enhanced outreach programme of **Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO)**, a new platform named **"Samwad with Students" (SwS)** was launched in Bengaluru.

ABOUT THE SWS INITIATIVE:

- ❖ ISRO aims to **engage youngsters across India to capture their scientific temperament.**
- ❖ The new conversation mission will inspire students cutting across schools and colleges.
- ❖ The first SwS event saw 40 wards and 10 teachers from select schools interact with ISRO Chairman Dr K Sivan at the Anthariksh Bhavan.
- ❖ An ambitious web-based single-window system 'Parivesh' will be rolled-out at state levels by January 15, bringing an end to the clearance nightmare for entrepreneurs. The automated system for submission, clearance and monitoring has already been implemented at the Central level.

What is it?

- ❖ It is an environmental single window hub for Environment, Forest, Wildlife and CRZ clearances. This Single-Window Integrated Environmental Management System has been developed in pursuance of the spirit of ‘Digital India’ initiated by the Prime Minister and capturing the essence of Minimum Government and Maximum Governance.

Key features:

- ❖ **PARIVESH** is a workflow based application, based on the concept of web architecture. **It has been rolled out for online submission, monitoring and management of proposals submitted by Project Proponents to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MOEFCC), as well as to the State Level Environmental Impact Assessment Authorities (SEIAA).**
- ❖ It seeks *to give various types of clearances* (e.g. Environment, Forest, Wildlife and Coastal Regulation Zone Clearances) from Central, State and district-level authorities.
- ❖ **The system has been designed, developed and hosted by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, with technical support from National Informatics Centre, (NIC).**
- ❖ *It provides* single registration and single sign-in for all types of clearances (i.e. Environment, Forest, Wildlife and CRZ), unique-ID for all types of clearances required for a particular project and a single Window interface for the proponent to submit applications for getting all types of clearances (i.e. Environment, Forests, Wildlife and CRZ clearances)

The Union Cabinet (chaired by Prime Minister) has approved the introduction of The Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 2018 in the Parliament for certain amendments in the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950 so as to modify the list of Scheduled Tribes (STs) of Arunachal Pradesh.

- ❖ Changes made in list of Scheduled Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh are:
- ❖ Deletion of ‘Abor’ in serial No. 1, as it is the same as ‘Adi’ in Serial No. 16.
- ❖ Replace ‘**Tai Khamti**’ instead of ‘**Khampti**’ at serial No. 6.

- ❖ Inclusion of ‘Mishmi-Kaman’ (Miju Mishmi), Idu (Mishmi) and Tاراon (Digaru Mishmi) in serial No. 8.
- ❖ Inclusion of Monpa, Memba, Sartang, Sajolong (Miji) in serial No. 9 in lieu of ‘Momba’.
- ❖ Inclusion of ‘Nocte’, ‘Tangsa’, ‘Tutsa’, ‘Wancho’ in lieu of ‘Any Naga Tribes’ in serial No. 10 in list of Scheduled Tribes of Arunachal Pradesh.
- ❖ After the Bill becomes an Act, member of the communities newly listed will also be able to derive benefits meant for STs under the existing schemes of the Government

The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) plans to raise Rs10,000crore through Bharatmala Taxable Bonds in the ongoing financial year.

- ❖ As per the internal and extra budgetary resources approved for 2018-19 by the government, a sum of Rs62,000 crore is to be raised by NHAI through various instruments/sources including Bharatmala bonds.

WHAT IS BHARATMALA PROJECT?

- ❖ Bharatmala Project is the second *largest highways construction project in the country since NHDP*, under which almost 50,000 km or highway roads were targeted across the country. Bharatmala will look to improve connectivity particularly on economic corridors, border areas and far flung areas with an aim of quicker movement of cargo and boosting exports.
- ❖ *street Lighting National Programme (SLNP)* when it was launched on January 5, 2015.**Objectives:**
 - ❖ Mitigate climate change by implementing energy efficient LED based street lighting.
 - ❖ Reduce energy consumption in lighting which helps DISCOMs to manage peak demand.
 - ❖ Provide a sustainable service model that obviates the need for upfront capital investment as well as additional revenue expenditure to pay for procurement of LED lights.
 - ❖ Enhance municipal services at no upfront capital cost of municipalities.

106th 'Indian Science Congress (ISC)' session is being held at Jalandhar, Punjab.

Theme – Future India: Science and Technology.

- ❖ The 2019 edition of the *Climate Change Performance Index (CCPI)* has been released.

highlights of the report:

- ❖ Only few countries have started working towards limiting global warming below 2°C or even at 1.5°C.
- ❖ Globally, Sweden is in top position, followed by Morocco and Lithuania in the CCPI 2019.
- ❖ The bottoms five in the list are Saudi Arabia, U.S., Iran, South Korea and Taiwan.
- ❖ India ranks 11th in this year's CCPI, improving its standing by three places compared to the previous edition.
- ❖ China has named the *lunar rover*, successfully deployed to carry out a string of experiments on the far side of the moon, as '*Yutu-2*'. The rover's touchdown is *part of China Chang'e-4 lunar probe*.

MISSION INDRADHANUSH –

- ❖ To strengthen and re-energize the programme and achieve full immunization coverage for all children and pregnant women at a rapid pace, the Government of India launched "**Mission indradhanush**" in December 2014.

Mission Indradhanush's Goal –

- ❖ The ultimate goal is to ensure full immunization with all available vaccines for children up to two years of age and pregnant women. The Government has identified 201 high focus districts across 28 states that have the highest number of partially immunized and unimmunized children.

Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI) –

- ❖ To further intensify the immunization programme, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the Intensified Mission (IMI) on October 8, 2017.
- ❖ Government of India aims to reach each and every child up to two years of age and all those pregnant women who have been left uncovered under the routine immunization programme/UIP.
- ❖ The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has sounded *a yellow alert for the cyclone Pabuk*. Cyclone Pabuk originated over the Gulf of Thailand and neighbourhood.
- ❖ The restructured **National Bamboo Mission (NBM)** was approved in April, 2018 for implementation till the end of 14th Finance Commission i.e. 2019-2020.

Aim of the Mission:

- ❖ It aims to **inter-alia supplement farm income of farmers with focus on the development of complete value chain of bamboo sector** linking growers with industry.

Implementation:

- ❖ The scheme is being implemented in non-forest Government land, farmers field in States where it has social, commercial and economical advantage, including the bamboo rich States of North Eastern region and Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

NILEKANI PANEL TO STRENGTHEN THE DIGITAL PAYMENTS ECOSYSTEM:

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has constituted a high-level committee under Nandan Nilekani to suggest measures to strengthen the safety and security of digital payments in the country.

- ❖ RBI has provided the following terms of reference for the committee:
- ❖ To encourage digitisation of payments and enhance financial inclusion through digitization.
- ❖ Reviewing the existing status of digitisation of payments in the country, identifying the current gaps in the ecosystem and suggesting ways to bridge them.
- ❖ Assessing the current levels of digital payments in financial inclusion.
- ❖ Suggest measures to strengthen the safety and security of digital payments.

About Gangajal Project:

- ❖ It aims to bring 140 cusecs of Ganga Water to Agra which will help meet the drinking water demands in the city.
- ❖ It will provide Agra with better and more assured water supply, at an estimated cost of Rs. 2880 crores.
- ❖ The project was launched in 2005 in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency and was scheduled to be completed by March 2012 but the project has missed several deadlines.
- ❖ Under the Gangajal project, Agra will get 140 cusec water supply per day from Palraheadworks in Bulandshahr's Upper Ganga canal.
- ❖ India's longest single-lane steel cable suspension bridge has been inaugurated over Siang River in Upper Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- ❖ The bridge is 300-metre-long and is also known as byorong bridge. The bridge will reduce the distance between Yingkiong and Tuting in Arunachal Pradesh by almost 40 km.

Siang River: The Tsangporiver, which originates in the Angsi Glacier in the Himalayas, enters India through Arunachal Pradesh where it is called by name Siang. The river is also called as Dihang in the plain regions. It is joined by the rivers Dibang and Lohit.

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

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