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Table of Contents

1. BIMSTEC	1	30. Establishment of National Council for Vocational Education and Training	21
2. Merger of CSO and NSSO	1	31. Foreigners Tribunals.....	21
3. Digital Dilemma.....	2	32. Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN)	22
4. Election on more than one seat	3	33. Inner Line Permit	23
5. OIC and India	3	34. NCRB and Facial Recognition	23
6. Draft National Education Policy, 2019	4	35. Generic medicines and Drugs and Cosmetics rules	24
7. Recognition of Parties in India.....	4	36. Surrogacy Bill.....	24
8. Jal Shakti Ministry	6	37. UNESCO Education Report on CWDs	25
9. Creation of Ministries/Departments.....	6	38. Swadesh Darshan scheme	25
10. Reconstitution of Cabinet Committees	7	39. Creamy Layer formula for OBCs	26
11. Foreigners Tribunals	7	40. Transgender Bill	26
12. Article 21 and issue of Social media posts	8	41. Bill for Resident Doctors.....	27
13. Speaker and Pro-Tem Speaker in Lok Sabha	9	42. 15th Finance Commission- Changes	27
14. Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010.....	11	43. NIA (Amendment) Bill, 2019	27
15. SVEEP.....	12	44. Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Bill, 2019	28
16. Data Localisation and Srikrishna Panel Report.....	12	45. Model Tenancy Act (MTA)	29
17. Metropolitan Areas in India.....	12	46. Operation Thirst	29
18. 'One Nation, One Vote'	13	47. Swadhar Greh Scheme	29
19. NRC and Additional Draft Exclusion List	15	48. Whip.....	30
20. SARATHI and Universal Smart Card Driving License.....	16	49. Anti-Defection Law	31
21. Cauvery Water Management Authority	16	50. NHRC Amendment Bill	32
22. Draft National Policy for Domestic Workers.....	17	51. Right to Information (Amendment) Bill 2019.....	33
23. Prison Statistics India 2016 Report.....	17	52. Changes proposed under the Amendment Act.....	33
24. Leader of Opposition	18	53. The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2019	34
25. Article 341	19	54. National Medical Commission Bill, 2019	35
26. Department of Public Enterprises and CPSEs.....	19	55. Jammu & Kashmir.....	37
27. Statistics' Day.....	20	56. The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, 2019.....	38
28. Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme (EQUIP)	20	57. Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2019	39
29. New Policy for Women Empowerment.....	21		

58. The Consumer Protection Bill, 201940	87.Fundamental rights are enforceable in a court of law.....58
59. National Digital Health Blueprint Report 41	88.6th India Water Week-2019.....58
60. KABIL.....41	89.ERSS, E-Beat Book and E-Saathi App58
61. The Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, 2019.....42	90.Astra Missile.....59
62. Swachh Survekshan Grameen 201942	91.Sardar Patel National Unity Award59
63. Haryana Administrative Tribunal.....43	92.Voluntary Code of Ethics60
64. Aadi Mahotsav.....43	93.10 Year Rural Sanitation Strategy (2019-2029)60
65.One Stop Solution To Verify & Authenticate Voter Details44	94.Aadi Mahotsav61
66.Declaration Of Certain Individuals As Terrorists Under The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 196744	95.First School Education Quality Index (SEQI) 61
67.Rastriya Poshan Maah.....44	96.Praytna Parv by Ministry of Tourism.....61
68.Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Act, 2019.....45	97.The Gandhian Challenge62
69.The Interpol General Assembly.....46	98.Developing Asia and Urbanisation63
70.Motor Vehicles Amendment Act, 2019...46	99.Divisions of Supreme Court63
71.Krishna Water Dispute49	100. One Nation One FASTag.....63
72.Kisan Maan Dhan Yojana.....49	101. Justice A.K. Patnaik Committee.....64
73.Indian Skill Development Services.....50	102. Global Hunger Index.....64
74.Jal Jeevan Mission.....50	103.'Pradhan Mantri Innovative Learning Programme-DHRUV'65
75.Screening children for Leprosy and Tuberculosis50	104. Naga Peace talks65
76.National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP)51	105. Ayodhya Dispute and Verdict67
77.Guidelines for drones in India.....51	106. Jansankhya Sthirata Kosh69
78.Jammu and Kashmir's Public Safety Act.52	107.Census 2021.....69
79.Bamboonomics53	108. Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh70
80.LEAP and ARPIT53	109. Santusht Portal.....70
81.Multipurpose National Identity Card (MPNIC)54	110. Report on Building a 21st Century Health System for India70
82.Satluj Yamuna Link Canal Issue.....54	111. Jaccha-Baccha Survey71
83.Malnutrition and Diseases in under-5 children.....55	112. Sabrimala Verdict-Points to Remember 71
84.All India Survey on Higher Education56	113. Muslim women's entry into mosques and dargahs72
85.National Educational Alliance for Technology.....57	114. Female genital mutilation among Dawoodi Bohras72
86.Uniform Civil Code.....57	115. Entry of Parsi women married to non-Parsis in the Agyari72
	116. Essentiality test in Religion.....72
	117. Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 201973
	118. Review of Ayodhya Verdict.....75

119. India Pavilion at COP-25 in Madrid, Spain 75	151. Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme (EQUIP).....95
120. Parliament passes the Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (Merger of Union Territories) Bill, 2019.....76	152. Swayam 2.0.....95
121. Cabinet Nod to Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019.....76	153. Ujala & Street Lighting National Programme96
122. Oath taken by Ministers in India.....76	154. Changes to the Railway Board97
123. Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019.....77	155. Article 131 of the Constitution97
124. Important Components of the Bill78	156. Classical Languages in India.....98
125. CAA Protests79	157. National Policy for Rare Diseases.....99
126. Global Refugee Forum80	158. Police Commissionerate System100
127. Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers and Training.....80	159. Census and cities in India.....101
128. The Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019.....81	160. NCRB Reports 2018- Crime in India and ADSI.....101
129. Data Bank of Farmers81	161. Bru-Reang Agreement103
130. Livestock Census 2019.....81	162. What is NSA?.....104
131. National Ganga Council.....82	163. National Investigation Agency and 2019 Amendment.....105
132. FSSAI's Hygiene Rating Scheme.....84	164. Time to Care: Unpaid and Underpaid Care Work and the Global Inequality Crisis..106
133. SDG India Index.....84	165. Global Social Mobility Report.....107
134. Atal Bhujal Yojana.....84	166. Relevance of 26th January.....108
135. National Population Register.....85	167. Bodo Accord108
136. Atal Bhujal Yojana (ATAL JAL)86	168. Scrapping of Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council109
137. Tunnel under Rohtang Pass.....86	169. Democracy Index.....110
138. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana 87	170. The Chief Guest at the Republic Day....111
139. Begum Hazrat Mahal Girls Scholarships 87	171. RS Committee on Pornography on Social Media and its Effect on Children.....111
140. Haj88	172. Bodo Language112
141. EChO Network.....88	173. Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020.....113
142. Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP).....89	174. Economic Survey and CEA.....113
143. First Chief of Defence Staff of India.....89	175. 15th Finance Commission.....114
144. Dissent Relevant To Democracy - Judiciary 91	176. Writ of Mandamus.....115
145. NITI Aayog's SDG India Index.....91	177. Select Committee on Surrogacy Bill116
146. December 27th And National Anthem 92	178. Web Portal Launched for Star Rating of Mines117
147. Upgrade of BrahMos92	179. National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage117
148. Good Governance Index.....93	
149. Supreme Court and Divorce In Hindu Marriage.....93	
150. Curative Petition94	

180. National Bureau of Water Use Efficiency 118	205. Supreme Court order on Cryptocurrencies 137
181. National Health Policy with Emphasis on EWSs.....118	206. The Epidemics Diseases Act of 1897....137
182. Medical Device (Amendment) Rules 2020 119	207. Essential Commodities Act.....138
183. Reservation and Ninth Schedule.....119	208. Introduction of Private Trains.....139
184. Corporate Train Model in Indian Railways 120	209. Bibek Debroy Committee Report 2015 139
185. National Survey on Manual Scavenging 121	210. The Mineral Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2020 141
186. The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013121	211. Nomination In Rajya Sabha141
187. Treatment of Child Witnesses.....122	212. Updation of National Population Register: 142
188. Law and Order and Powers of the Delhi Govt.123	213. Section 188 of IPC.....143
189. Air Quality Report.....124	214. Guidelines for Victims of Humanitarian Crisis144
190. Vacancies and elections in Rajya Sabha 124	215. Trust Vote in Madhya Pradesh.....144
191. Election Card not a proof of Citizenship 125	
192. Unifying Defence resources125	
193. Delhi's Happiness Curriculum126	
194. Preventive Detention127	
195. Central Consumer Protection Authority 129	
196. Visa Guidelines on Anti-government activities130	
197. Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2019 131	
198. Anti-lynching Bill in USA.....132	
199. Anti-lynching Bill in USA.....133	
200. UNHCR approaches Supreme Court.....134	
201. Ethnic Violence in Meghalaya135	
202. UNDP's Gender Social Norms Index135	
203. Right of Accused to be Defended.....136	
204. Digital Locker service by Postal Department136	

1. BIMSTEC

- The leaders of the member states of BIMSTEC were invited to the swearing ceremony of PM-Narendra Modi. It was regarded as a key aspect of India's neighbourhood first and Act East policy.
- Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation is what BIMSTEC stands for. Comprising of seven member states, it is a regional organization. India along with Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand are the Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand are the constituent members. The permanent secretariat is in Dhaka.
- Five of its member-states are rim countries of the Bay of Bengal and two (Bhutan and Nepal) are landlocked countries, which never the less depend on the Bay of Bengal for access to maritime trade. Importantly, with the exception of India and Bhutan, the other BIMSTEC members are participating in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- On 6 June 1997, a new sub-regional grouping was formed in Bangkok under the name BIST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, and Thailand Economic Cooperation).
- Following the inclusion of Myanmar on 22 December 1997 during a special Ministerial Meeting in Bangkok, the Group was renamed BIMST-EC' (Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka and Thailand Economic Cooperation). In 1998, Nepal became an observer. In February 2004, Nepal and Bhutan became full members.
- On 31 July 2004, in the first Summit the grouping was renamed as BIMSTEC or the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and BIMSTEC or the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation. BIMSTEC uses the alphabetical order for the Chairmanship. The Chairmanship of BIMSTEC has been taken in rotation commencing with Bangladesh(1997-1999).
- The 18-point Kathmandu Declaration of 4th Summit is expected to enhance the effectiveness of BIMSTEC Secretariat by engaging it in various technical and economic activities in the region. During the Summit, foreign ministers of BIMSTEC member countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the Establishment of BIMSTEC Grid Interconnection.

2. Merger of CSO and NSSO

- **Commission under Chairpersonship of Dr. C. Rangarajan**, which reviewed the Indian Statistical System in 2001, recommended for the creation of National Statistical Office (NSO) to be headed by a National Statistician, with appropriate autonomy and independence for producing Official Statistics as is prevalent in other countries.
- It would have worked under the **National Statistical Commission (NSC), which was to be answerable to Parliament, not the government**. The intent was to clean up collection, calculation and dissemination of the intent was to clean up collection, calculation and dissemination of data. NSC was set up in June 2005, but didn't have a statutory role. It was given supervisory powers over one arm of the statistical system, NSSO. The idea of an NSO that would include NSSO and CSO was not implemented.

- The Government, while accepting the recommendations, approved the establishment of NSO to be headed by Chief Statistician of India by merging the then Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) and National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) to form the NSO. The order puts the entity under MoSPI secretary.
- The government had set up the NSC through a resolution on June 1, 2005. The NSC was constituted on July 12, 2006 with a mandate to evolve policies, priorities and standards in statistical matters. The NSC has four Members besides a Chairperson, each having four Members besides a Chairperson, each having specialization and experience in specified statistical fields.
- The **CSO headed by a DG brings out macro economic data like economic (GDP) growth data, industrial production and inflation.**
- The **NSSO conducts large-scale surveys and brings out reports on health, education, household expenditure and other social and economic indicators.** The NSSO and the CSO were functioning independently.
- In May, the NSSO came out with a report which cast serious doubt on the reliability of raw data that is used to calculate India's gross domestic product (GDP). The NSSO stated that it could not either **trace or classify 38.7% of the companies included in the MCA-21, a database of private companies that is maintained by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs**, whose financial numbers the government currently uses to calculate financial numbers the government currently uses to calculate GDP figures.
- Earlier in January this year, two non-governmental members of the NSC PC Mohanan and JV Meenakshi had put in their papers because they were reportedly disappointed over the way the government had sidelined them.

3. Digital Dilemma

- Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences (popularly known as Oscar Academy), e-launched the Hindi translation of an Academy Publication, "Digital Dilemma", in Delhi with National Film Archive of India.
- There are many challenges thrown by the technological changes in the film storage medium and this book will help film makers in understanding and planning the storage of born-digital material. National Film Archive of India, the premier organization of Ministry of Information and India, the premier organization of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting which is involved in film conservation, preservation and restoration.
- In its landmark report, the Academy's Science and Technology Council examined ways in which key players in the movie business currently store and access important digital data. Through years of research, the Council discovered that issues of digital storage reliability go far beyond lost snapshots and spreadsheets. The publication discusses the challenges of efficiently archiving and accessing the massive data.

4. Election on more than one seat

- Under the Constitution, an individual cannot simultaneously be a member of both Houses of Parliament (or a state legislature), or both Parliament and a state legislature, or represent more than one seat in a House.
- With regard to the Houses of Parliament, **if a person is elected simultaneously to both Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha**, and if he has not yet taken his seat in either House, he can choose, within **10 days** from the later of the dates on which he is chosen to those Houses, the House of which he would like to be a member. **[Article 101(1) of the Constitution read with Section 68(1) of The Representation of the People Act, 1951]**
- The member must intimate his choice in writing to the Secretary to the Election Commission of India (ECI) within the 10-day window, failing which his seat in Rajya Sabha will fall vacant at the end of this period. [Sec 68(2), RPA 1951]. The choice, once intimated is final. [Sec 68(3), RPA, 1951]
- **No such option is, however, available to a person who is already a member of one House and has contested the election for membership of the other House.** So, if, a sitting Rajya Sabha member contests and wins a Lok Sabha election, his seat in the Upper House becomes automatically vacant on the date he is declared elected to Lok Sabha and vice versa. **[Sec 69 read with Sec 67A, RPA 1951].** ECI issues the 'Due Constitution' notification for the new Lok Sabha under Sec 73 of the RPA 1951.
- Under Sec 33(7) of RPA, 1951, **an individual can contest from two parliamentary constituencies but, if elected from both, he has to resign one seat within 14 days of the declaration of the result**, failing which both his seats shall fall vacant. [Sec 70, RPA, 1951 read with Rule 91 of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961].
- Under Article 101(2) of the Constitution (read with Rule 2 of the Prohibition of Simultaneous Membership 2 of the Prohibition of Simultaneous Membership Rules, 1950, made by the President under this Article) **members of state legislatures who have been elected to Lok Sabha must resign their seats within 14 days** "from the date of publication in the Gazette of India or in the Official Gazette of the State, whichever is later, of the declaration that he has been so chosen", failing which their seats in Lok Sabha shall automatically fall vacant.

5. OIC and India

- India has "categorically rejected" the "unacceptable reference" to Jammu and Kashmir by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) at its Summit meeting at Mecca, Saudi Arabia. OIC headquarters are at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.
- The Final Communique of the 14th Islamic Summit Conference in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, "reaffirmed its principled support for the people of Jammu and Kashmir for the realization of their legitimate right to self-determination, in accordance with relevant resolutions".
- OIC is an international organization founded in 1969, consisting of 57 member states, with a collective population of over 1.8 billion as of 2015 with 53 countries being Muslim-majority countries. It has permanent delegations to the United Nations and the European Union.

- For the first time in five decades, the United Arab Emirates invited former foreign minister of India Sushma Swaraj to attend the inaugural plenary 46th meeting of OIC foreign ministers held in Abu Dhabi on 1 and 2 March overruling strong objections by Pakistan. Pakistan boycotted the meet objecting to the invitation to India. Swaraj addressed the meet raising concern for spreading terrorism.

6. Draft National Education Policy, 2019

- The draft National Education Policy 2019 witnessed a lot controversy due to what was seen as an imposition of Hindi language. **The existing NEP was framed in 1986 and revised in 1992.**
- The Draft Policy was prepared by a **committee headed by Dr. K. Kasturirangan drawing inputs from the earlier T.S.R. Subramanian Committee report**. The Draft Policy is built on foundational pillars of **Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability & Accountability**. Key point so the draft include:
- It proposes the creation of several new bodies to overlook different facets of education. For one, there is a suggestion for a new apex body **National Higher Education Regulatory Authority/Rashtriya Shiksha Ayog** to implement educational initiatives and programmatic interventions and to coordinate efforts between the Centre and states. It further suggests that it should be the only regulator for all higher education including professional education.
- Another apex body **National Research Foundation** is proposed for building research capacity across higher education.
- In school education, one idea is to cover children of 3-18 years [instead of the present 6-14 years under the Right to Education (RTE) Act], three years under early childhood care and education (ECCE) and four years under secondary education.
- The draft education policy also said that the popularity of English in the country is due to the adoption of the language by the 'economic elite'.
- The earlier draft education policy proposed English and Hindi as mandatory languages in non-Hindi speaking states as well as a third language for Hindi speaking states. Following the proposal, there was public outcry in Southern states.
- The three-language formula, dating back to 1968, means students in Hindi - speaking states should learn a modern Indian language, apart from Hindi and English and, in non-Hindi-speaking states, Hindi along with the regional language and English. Tamil Nadu has always opposed this policy, and the new row is over the draft NEP proposing its continuation.
- After protests, the revised version states: "In keeping with the principle of flexibility, students who wish to change one or more of the three languages they are studying may do so in Grade 6 or Grade 7, so long as they are able to still demonstrate proficiency in three languages (one language at the literature level) in their modular Board Examinations some time during secondary school."

7. Recognition of Parties in India

- **Meghalaya's National People's Party led by Conrad Sangma, was recognised as a "national party".** The NPP is the eighth party to get that recognition – after Congress, BJP, BSP, NCP, CPI, CPI(M) and Trinamool Congress – and the first from the Northeast.

- The Election Commission lists political parties as “national party”, “state party” or “registered (unrecognised) party”. The conditions for being listed as a national or a state party are specified under the Election Symbols (Reservation and Allotment) Order, 1968. A party has to satisfy any one of a number of the conditions.
- For recognition as a national party, the conditions specified under Paragraph 6B of the 1968 Order are:
 - ✓ 6% vote share in the last Assembly polls in each of any four states, as well as four seats in the last Lok Sabha polls; or
 - ✓ 2% of all Lok Sabha seats in the last such election, with MPs elected from at least three states; or
 - ✓ recognitions state party in at least four states.
- The NPP has satisfied the last of these conditions. It is recognised as a **state party in four states – Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur and Nagaland, besides Meghalaya**. It has earned that recognition by fulfilling different conditions in different states.
- For recognition as a state party, any one of five conditions needs to be satisfied. These are specified under paragraph 6A of the Order:
 - ✓ two seats plus a 6% vote share in the last Assembly election in that state; or
 - ✓ one seat plus a 6% vote share in the last Lok Sabha election from that state; or
 - ✓ 3% of the total Assembly seats or 3 seats, whichever is more; or
 - ✓ one of every 25 Lok Sabha seats (or an equivalent fraction) from a state; or
 - ✓ an 8% state-wide vote share in either the last Lok Sabha or the last Assembly polls.
- Once recognised as a national or a state party, a political party retains that status irrespective of its performance in the next elections. It **loses the given status only if it fails to fulfil any of the conditions for two successive Assembly and two successive Lok Sabha elections**.
- The recognition granted by the Commission to the parties determines their right to certain privileges like allocation of the party symbols, provision of time for political broadcasts on the state-owned television and radio stations and access to electoral rolls.
- Further, the recognized parties need only one proposer for filing the nomination. Also, these parties are allowed to have forty “star campaigners” during the time of elections and the registered-unrecognized parties are allowed to have twenty “star campaigners”. The travel expenses of these star campaigners are not included in the election expenditure of the candidates of their parties.
- Every national party is allotted a symbol exclusively reserved for its use throughout the country. Similarly, every state party is allotted a symbol exclusively reserved for its use in the state or states in which it is so recognised. A registered-unrecognized party, on the other hand, can select a symbol from a list of free symbols.

8. Jal Shakti Ministry

- Fulfilling its poll promise, the government has launched a **new unified 'Jal Shakti' ministry** that is aimed at providing clean drinking water as well as fight India's water woes.
- The new ministry has been formed by merging the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation and Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation headed by Gajendra Singh Shekhawat.
- The mandate of the newly-formed Jal Shakti Ministry will go much beyond bringing previous ministries of water resources and drinking water and sanitation under one umbrella. It will attempt to integrate demand side and supply side of water in the country so that the issues relating to water are dealt with in a holistic manner.
- To increase piped water coverage from the existing low 18 per cent to 100 per cent coverage by 2024, the Centre has requested all states to adopt an approach similar to the newly-formulated Jal Shakti Ministry that integrates all ministries and bodies dealing with water under one umbrella.
- There are several other Central ministries that deal with water in a piecemeal manner. For instance:
 - ✓ the Ministry of Forest and Environment is entrusted with conservation of most rivers in the country
 - ✓ Similarly, urban water supply is looked after by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs and ;
 - ✓ micro-irrigation projects come under the Ministry of Agriculture.
- In the Constitution, water is included as **Entry 17 on List II that is the State List. This entry is subject to the provision of Entry 56 of List-I i.e. Union List which enables the Union to deal with inter-State rivers if Parliament legislates for the purpose.**

9. Creation of Ministries/Departments

- The Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961 is **made by the President of India under Article 77 of the Constitution for the allocation of business of the Government of India.**
- The **Ministries/Departments of the Government of India are created by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister under these Rules.**
- The business of the Government of India are transacted in the ministries/departments, secretariats and offices (referred to as "Department") as per the distribution of subjects specified in these Rules.
 - ✓ Each of the Ministry (ies) will be assigned to a Minister by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister.
 - ✓ Each department will be generally under Each of the Ministry (ies) will be assigned to a Minister by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister.
 - ✓ Each department will be generally under the charge of a Secretary to assist the Minister on policy matters and general administration.

- **The Cabinet Secretariat is responsible for secretarial assistance to the Cabinet**, its committees and ad hoc Groups of Ministers, and for maintenance of record of their decisions and proceedings. The Secretariat monitors implementation of the decisions/directions of the Cabinet/Cabinet Committees/groups of ministers.
- The Secretariat is also responsible for the administration of the Government of India (Transaction of Business) Rules, 1961 and facilitates smooth transaction of business in ministries/departments of the Government by ensuring adherence to these Rules.

10. Reconstitution of Cabinet Committees

- Under the Transaction of Business Rules, the Government has reconstituted Cabinet
 - ✓ Committees. These include - Appointments Committee of the Cabinet, Cabinet
 - ✓ Committee on Accommodation, Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, Cabinet
 - ✓ Committee on Parliamentary Affairs, Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs, Cabinet
 - ✓ Committee on Security and two new ones- Cabinet Committee on Investment and
- Growth and Cabinet Committee on Employment and Skill Development.
- In terms of the TBR, 1961, inter-alia, there shall be “Standing Committees of the Cabinet” as set out in the First Schedule to the TBR, 1961, with the functions specified therein.
- **The Prime Minister may, from time to time, amend the Schedule by adding to or reducing the numbers of such Committees or by modifying the functions assigned to them.** Every Standing Committee shall consist of such Ministers as the Prime Minister may from time to time specify. Conventionally, while Ministers with Cabinet rank are named as ‘members’ of the Standing Committees of the Cabinet, Ministers of State, irrespective of their status of having ‘Independent Charge’ of a Ministry/Department, and others ‘with rank of’ a Cabinet Minister or Minister of State are named as ‘special invitees’.
- The Second Schedule to TBR 1961, lists the items of Government business where the full Cabinet, and not any Standing Committee of the Cabinet should take a decision.
- However, to the extent there is a commonality between the cases enumerated in the Second Schedule and the cases set out in the First Schedule, the Standing Committees of the Cabinet shall be competent to take a final decision in the matter, except in cases where the relevant entries in the respective Schedules themselves preclude the Committees from taking such decisions. Also, any decision taken by a Standing Committee may be reviewed by the Cabinet

11. Foreigners Tribunals

- **The Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964** was issued by the Central Government under **Section 3 of The Foreigners Act, 1946**. It is applicable to the whole country. Major amendments in the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964 were undertaken in 2013. The last amendment was issued in May 2019. All these orders are applicable to the whole country and are not specific to any state.
- The May 2019 amendment only lays down the modalities for the Tribunals to decide on appeals made by persons not satisfied with the outcome of claims and objections filed against the NRC.

- Since NRC work is going on only in Assam, therefore, the aforementioned Order, issued on 30th May 2019 is applicable only to Assam as on date for all practical purposes. This Amendment Order also provides for reference by District Magistrate to the Tribunal for its opinion as to whether the Appellant is a “foreigner” or not within the meaning of the Foreigners Act, 1946.
- The amended order also allows District Magistrates to refer individuals who haven’t filed claims against their exclusion from NRC to the Tribunals to decide if they are foreigners or not.
- The MHA has amended the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964, and has **empowered district magistrates in all States and Union Territories to set up tribunals to decide whether a person staying illegally in India is a foreigner or not. Earlier, the powers to constitute tribunals were vested only with the Centre.**
- Recently, the MHA sanctioned around 1,000 Tribunals, which are quasi-judicial bodies, to be set up in Assam in the wake of the publication of the final NRC by July 31. As per the directions of the Supreme Court, the Registrar General of India (RGI) published the final draft list of NRC on July 30 last year to segregate Indian citizens living in Assam from those who had illegally entered the State from Bangladesh after March 25, 1971.
- The amended Foreigners (Tribunal) Order, 2019 also **empowers individuals to approach the Tribunals.** Earlier only the State administration could move the Tribunal against a suspect, but with the final NRC about to be published and to give adequate opportunity to those not included, this has been done. **If a person doesn’t find his or her name in the final list, they could move the Tribunal.**

12. Article 21 and issue of Social media posts

- The Supreme Court on Tuesday ordered the immediate release of journalist Prashant Kanojia on bail in the issue of having shared on social media a video of a woman claiming she had sent a marriage proposal to Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.
- The hearing on Tuesday was based on the **habeas corpus petition** moved by Mr. Kanojia’s wife, Jagisha Arora, represented by advocate Nitya Ramakrishnan, under Article 32 of the Constitution. The ASG argued that a habeas corpus plea would not lie before the apex court as the accused had already been produced before the jurisdictional court and remanded in custody through a judicial order.
- But the court differed with the government, saying **Article 32 enshrined a fundamental right.** The Bench **threatened to use its extraordinary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution to do complete justice** in the Kanojia case.
- Article 142 of the Constitution of India deals with **enforcement of decrees and orders of Supreme Court and unless as to discovery, etc.** It states that the Supreme Court in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it.
- **The Supreme Court (under Article 32) and the high courts (under Article 226) can issue the writs of habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, certiorari, and quo-warranto.**
- Further, the Parliament (under Article 32) can empower any other court to issue these writs. Since no such provision has been made so far, only the Supreme Court and the high courts can issue the writs and not any other court.

- Before 1950, only the High Courts of Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras had the power to issue the writs. Article 226 now empowers all the high courts to issue the writs. These writs are borrowed from English law where they are known as 'prerogative writs'. They are so
- **Habeas Corpus**- It is a Latin term which literally means '**to have the body of**'. It is an order issued by the court to a person who has detained another person, to produce the body of the latter before it. The court then examines the cause and legality of a detention. It would set the detained person free if the detention is found to be illegal.
- Thus, this writ is a bulwark of individual liberty against arbitrary detention. The writ of habeas corpus can be issued **against both public authorities as well as private individuals**.
- The writ, on the other hand, is not issued where the:
 - A. detention is lawful,
 - B. the proceeding is for contempt of a legislature or a court,
 - C. detention is by a competent court, and
 - D. detention is outside the jurisdiction of the court.
- Called in England as they were issued in the exercise of the prerogative of the King who was, and is still, described as the 'fountain of justice'. Later, the high court started issuing these writs as extraordinary remedies to uphold the rights and liberties of the British people.

13. Speaker and Pro-Tem Speaker in Lok Sabha

- The Speaker of the Lok Sabha is the presiding officer of the Lok Sabha. The speaker is elected generally in the very first meeting of the Lok Sabha following general elections.
- The Speaker holds office from the date of his/her election till immediately before the first meeting of the Lok Sabha after the dissolution of the one to which he/she was elected. He/she is eligible for re-election. On the dissolution of the Lok Sabha, although the Speaker ceases to be a member of the House, he/she does not vacate her office.
- The Speaker may, at any time, resign from office by writing under her hand to the Deputy Speaker. The Speaker can be removed from office only on a resolution of the House passed by a majority of all the then members of the House. Such a resolution has to satisfy some conditions like: it should be specific with respect to the charges and it should not contain arguments, inferences, ironical expressions, imputations or defamatory statements, etc. Not only these, discussions should be confined to charges referred to in the resolution. It is also mandatory to give a minimum of 14 days' notice of the intention to move the resolution.
- MP's propose a name to **Pro-tem speaker**. These names are notified to the President of India. President through their aid Secretary-General notifies the election date. If only one name is proposed, Speaker is elected without any formal vote.
- However, if more than 1 nominations are received, a **division (vote) is called**. MPs vote for their candidate on such date notified by President. The successful candidate is elected as Speaker of the Lok Sabha until the next general election.

- The Deputy Speaker presides over the Lok Sabha when the Speaker is absent from the sitting of the House.
- The Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha provide that at the commencement of the House or from time to time, as the case may be, the Speaker shall nominate from amongst the Members a **Panel of not more than ten Chairpersons, any one of whom may preside over the House in the absence of the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker** when so requested by the Speaker or, in the absence of the Speaker, by the Deputy Speaker. A Chairperson so nominated holds office until a new Panel of Chairpersons is nominated unless he/she resigns earlier from the Panel or is appointed a Minister or elected as Deputy Speaker.

According to the Constitution of India, a Speaker is vested with immense administrative and discretionary powers, some of which are enumerated below:

- The Speaker presides over the meetings in the House. In other words, the business in the House is conducted by the Speaker, ensuring discipline and decorum amongst its members. He/she guards the rights and privileges of the members of the two Houses, deciding who should speak at what time, the questions to be asked, the order of proceedings to be followed, among others.
- A Speaker uses his/her power to vote, in order to **resolve a deadlock**. That is, when the House initiates a voting procedure, he does not cast a vote in the first instance. However, when the two sides receive an equal number of votes, the Speaker's vote is used to resolve the deadlock, making his position as impartial as in the English system of democracy.
- The **Speaker of the Lok Sabha presides over a joint sitting of the two Houses of Parliament**.
- Once a Money Bill is transmitted from the Lower House to the Upper House, the Speaker is solely responsible for **endorsing his or her certificate on the Bill. In other words, he/she is given the pivotal power to decide whether any Bill is a Money Bill**. This decision is considered final, and all procedures henceforth must be carried along accordingly.
- The Speaker has under his or her jurisdiction, a number of Parliamentary Committees such as the Rules Committee, the Business Advisory Committee, and the General Purposes Committee. The Speaker nominates the various Chairmen of these Committees, as well as looks into the procedural hindrances of the workings of these Committees if any.
- Besides heading the Lok Sabha, the Speaker is also the '**ex-officio**' **President of the Indian Parliamentary Group**. He/she also acts in the capacity of Chairman of the Conference of Presiding Officers of Legislative Bodies in India.
- As part of the Speaker's administrative role, he or she is the head of the Lok Sabha Secretariat, maintaining absolute security surveillance in the Parliament.
- The Speaker holds office during the life of the House, and once the House is dissolved, the Speaker's term of office ends. However, the Speaker can be re-elected to the post. The Speaker's office may, however, terminate earlier than the expiry of the House due to the following reasons:
 - ✓ When the Speaker ceases to be a Member of the House.
 - ✓ When the Speaker resigns by writing to the Deputy Speaker.

- ✓ When the Speaker is removed from office by a resolution that is passed by a majority of all the members of the House. While such a process is underway, the Speaker cannot preside over the House but can take part in the proceedings of the House.

Pro-Tem Speaker:

- When the Offices of both the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker fall vacant, the duties of the Office of the Speaker are performed by such Member of the Lok Sabha as the President may appoint for the purpose. The person so appointed is known as the Speaker pro-tem.
- Pro-tem is a Latin phrase that translates to 'for the time being' in English. Pro-tem speaker is the temporary speaker who presides over the first meeting of the lower House of Parliament after the general elections besides presiding over the sitting in which the Speaker and Deputy Speaker are elected if it is a newly constituted House.
- A pro-tem speaker is chosen with the agreement of the members of the Lok Sabha and legislative assembly. Usually, the senior-most member of the house is selected for the post, who then carries on the activities until the permanent speaker is chosen.
- The main duty of the pro-tem speaker is to administer the oath of office to new members of the house. He also enables the House to elect the new speaker.
- Once the new speaker is elected, the office of the pro-tem speaker ceases to exist. He also administers the floor test.

14. Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010

- The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 is an act of the Parliament of India.
- It is a consolidating act whose scope is to regulate the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality by certain individuals or associations or companies and to prohibit acceptance and utilisation of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality for any activities detrimental to the national interest and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- It is designed to correct shortfalls in the predecessor act of 1976. In terms of FCRA, 2010 "**person**" includes – (i) an individual; (ii) a Hindu undivided family; (iii) an association; and (iv) a company registered under section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956.
- As per the 2010 Act, any organisation of a political nature and any association or company engaged in the production and broadcast of audio or audio visual news or current affairs programme have been placed in the category prohibited to accept foreign contribution.
- Further, a new provision has been introduced to the effect that no person who receives foreign contribution as per provisions of this Act, shall transfer to other person unless that person is also authorized to receive foreign contribution as per rules made by the Central Government.
- Another new provision has been made to the effect that foreign contribution shall **be utilized for the purpose for which it has been received and such contribution can be used for administrative expenses up to 50% of such contribution received in a financial year.** However, administrative expenses exceeding fifty per cent of the contribution to be defrayed with the prior approval of the Central Government.

- Contributions made by a citizen of India living in another country (i.e., Non-Resident Indian), from his personal savings, through the normal banking channels, is not treated as foreign contribution.

15. SVEEP

- SVEEP or Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation program, is the **flagship program of the Election Commission of India for voter education**, spreading voter awareness and promoting voter literacy in India. Since 2009, they have been working towards preparing India's electors and equipping them with basic knowledge related to the electoral process.
- SVEEP's primary goal is to build a truly participative democracy in India by encouraging all eligible citizens to vote and make an informed decision during the elections.
- The programme is based on multiple general as well as targeted interventions that are designed according to the socio-economic, cultural and demographic profile of the state as well as the history of electoral participation in previous rounds of elections and learning thereof.
- Greater Participation for a Stronger Democracy' is the motto for the SVEEP programme. In 2011, the government started with **National Voters' Day to be celebrated on 25th June** every year as a part of the programme.

16. Data Localisation and Srikrishna Panel Report

- **Justice B N Srikrishna Committee** disallowed cross-border transfer of **all critical personal data** and mandated that a live copy of data pertaining to Indian citizens be kept on servers in the country by all companies, at all times. **A subset of that data, labeled critical personal data, must be stored and processed only in India.**
- The RBI set a deadline for global companies to comply with the same. is allowed the cross-border transfer of all critical personal data and mandated that a live copy of data pertaining to Indian citizens be kept on servers in the country by all companies, at all times. As of now, much of cross-border data transfer is governed by individual bilateral "mutual legal assistance treaties" (MLATs) to obtain access, delaying investigations.
- The **European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)** does not mandate all data to be localised, but rather restricts flow to countries with a strong data protection framework. In 2018 **US President Donald Trump signed the Clarifying Lawful Overseas Use of Data Act (CLOUD Act)** which established data sharing with certain countries.
- Goals set in the Draft National Digital Communications Policy 2018, and the Guidelines for Government Departments for Contractual Terms related to Cloud Storage 2017, draft e-commerce policy and the draft report of the cloud policy panel show signs of data localization.

17. Metropolitan Areas in India

- Indian census considers an area as urban only if it fulfils the following criteria:
 - ✓ The population of the settlement should be 5000 or more
 - ✓ The density of at least 400 persons per sq.km
 - ✓ At least 75% of the male workers engaged in non-agricultural occupations

- Nine Indian metros feature in the top 150 ranks of the **Global Metro Monitor 2018 report released by Brookings**.
- By the **74th Amendment Act, 1992, Article 243P(c) of the Constitution defines 'metropolitan areas' as those having a "population of ten lakhs [a million] or more, comprised in one or more districts and consisting of two or more municipalities/panchayats/ other contiguous areas, specified by the governor through public notification to be a metropolitan area"**.
- Article 243 ZE provides for each metropolitan area, a Metropolitan Planning Committee has to be constituted.
- The Metropolitan Planning Committee is to prepare a draft development plan for the Metropolitan area as a whole.
- The Legislature of a State may, by law, make provisions with respect to-
 - ✓ the composition of the Metropolitan Planning Committees;
 - ✓ the manner in which the seats in such Committees shall be filled; Provided that not less than two-thirds of the members of such Committee shall be elected by, and from amongst, the elected members of the Municipalities and Chairpersons of the Panchayats in the Metropolitan area in proportion to the ratio between the population of the Municipalities and of the Panchayats in that area;
 - ❖ the representation, in such Committees of the Government of India and the Government of the State and of such organisations and institutions as may be deemed necessary for carrying out the functions assigned to such Committees;
 - ❖ the functions relating to planning and coordination for the Metropolitan area which may be assigned to such Committees;
 - ❖ the manner in which the Chairpersons of such Committees shall be chosen.

18. 'One Nation, One Vote'

- The **Law Commission of India (Chair: Justice B.S. Chauhan) released its draft report on Simultaneous Elections on August 30, 2018**. The report examined legal and constitutional questions related to the conduct of simultaneous elections. Key draft recommendations include:
- Conduct of simultaneous elections: The Commission noted that simultaneous elections cannot be held within the existing framework of the Constitution. Simultaneous elections may be conducted to Lok Sabha and state Legislative Assemblies through appropriate amendments to the Constitution, the Representation of the People Act 1951, and the Rules of Procedure of Lok Sabha and state Assemblies. The Commission also suggested that at least 50% of the states should ratify the constitutional amendments.
- The Commission noted that holding simultaneous elections will:
 - ✓ save public money,
 - ✓ reduce the burden on the administrative setup and security forces,
 - ✓ ensure timely implementation of government policies, and

- ✓ ensure that the administrative machinery is engaged in development activities rather than electioneering.
- The Commission noted that a no-confidence motion if passed may curtail the term of Lok Sabha/ state assembly.
 - ✓It recommended replacing the 'no-confidence motion' with a 'constructive vote of no-confidence', through appropriate amendments.
 - ✓In a constructive vote of no confidence, the government may only be removed if there is confidence in an alternative government.
 - ✓It further suggested the option of limiting the number of such motions during the term of the House/ Assembly.
- If no party secures a majority to form the government, it may result in a hung House/ Assembly. In order to prevent this, the Commission recommended that the President/ Governor should give an opportunity to the largest party along with their pre or post-poll alliance to form the government.
 - ✓ If the government can still not be formed, an all-party meeting may be called to resolve the stalemate. If this fails, mid-term elections may be held.
- The Commission recommended that appropriate amendments be made to provide that any new Lok Sabha/Assembly formed after mid-term elections, will be constituted only for the remainder of the previous term, and not the entire five years.
- NITI Aayog in their Report provided a definition of the term "Simultaneous Elections", as ideally, simultaneous elections should imply that elections to all the three tiers of constitutional institutions take place in a synchronized and coordinated fashion. What this effectively means is that a voter casts his vote for electing members for all tiers of the Government on a single day.
- The concept of simultaneous elections is in-fact not new to the country. Post-adoption of the Constitution, elections to Lok Sabha and all State Legislative Assemblies were held simultaneously over the period 1951 till 1967 when the cycle of synchronized elections got disrupted.
- Article 83(2) of the Constitution provides for a normal term of five years for the House of People (Lok Sabha). Article 172 (1) provides for similar tenure for the State Legislative Assembly from the date of its first sitting.
- Both Lok Sabha and State Assemblies do not have a fixed term and can be dissolved earlier than their normal terms. Various provisions in the Constitution and relevant directions laid down by the Supreme Court of India drive the stipulations (grounds leading to such dissolution, who has the power to effect such dissolution etc.) that may cause an early dissolution of legislatures.
- Tenure of the House cannot be extended beyond 5 years except in emergency situations.
- Election Commission of India is empowered to notify elections to both Lok Sabha and State Leg. six months prior to the end of the normal terms of the Houses

19. NRC and Additional Draft Exclusion List

- The NRC is basically a list of Indian citizens of Assam.
- NRC prepared in 1951 is being updated to include the names of people or their descendants who appear in the 1951 NRC, in any of the Electoral Rolls, or in any one of the other admissible documents issued up to the midnight of March 24, 1971.
- Those excluded from final draft could appeal for their inclusion in the final NRC through the 'claims' round. Under 'objections', people could raise objections to the inclusion of a person's name in the draft NRC.
- In last year's draft, published on July 30 last year, 2.89 crore of the 3.29 crore applicants were included, leaving out over 40 lakh people. Those excluded were given a chance to appeal in the 'claims and objections' round. Over one lakh people who were part of the final draft of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) published in July last year but were found ineligible thereafter – they have been named in the Additional Draft Exclusion List published on 26th June 2019.
- These over one lakh people were found ineligible during re-verification for any one of the following reasons:
 - ✓ **Persons who were found to be DF (Declared Foreigner) or,**
 - ✓ **DV (Doubtful Voter) or,**
 - ✓ **PFT (persons with cases Pending at Foreigners Tribunals) or,**
 - ✓ **their descendants,** as applicable, discovered after publication of draft NRC, persons who were found to be ineligible while appearing as witness in hearings held for disposal of Claims & Objections, persons who were found to be ineligible during the process of verification carried out by the Local Registrars of Citizens Registration (LRCRs) after publication of draft NRC.
- Such persons will have the opportunity to file their claims which will be disposed through a hearing by a Disposing Officer. The submission of Claim and its disposal by the Disposing Officer through a hearing will happen together.
- LOI will mention the details of the venue of claim submission cum hearing. The hearings will start from 5th July 2019 onwards. The date of hearings will also be available online in the NRC website from June 29 onwards. All such Claims will be disposed thereafter and results of such persons will be declared in the Final NRC on July 31 July 2019.
- The preparation of the draft exclusion list of the NRC was approved by the SC under the under Clause 5 of the Schedule of the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.
- The provision of suo moto verification is mentioned in Section 4 (3) of the Schedule of the above mentioned Citizenship Rules, 2003, which says that the local registrar of citizen registration (LRCR) may at any time before the final publication of NRC in the state of Assam may verify names already in the final draft NRC if considered necessary.

20. SARATHI and Universal Smart Card Driving License

- The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has decided to modify the format of driving licenses to laminated card without chip or smart card type driving licences.
- The Ministry has prescribed a common standard format and design of the Driving Licence for whole of the country which includes the placement of information, standardization of fonts etc.
- This Ministry through its **flagship application called SARATHI (for Driving License) developed by NIC (National Informatics Centre) have a common countrywide database of all driving license holders**. Almost 15 crore driving license records are available in its central repository (National Registry).
- The SARATHI application has the feature to identify duplicate records in real time online basis and access information about the challans if any, which facilitates the licensing authority that delinquent drivers do not get a duplicate driving licence.

21. Cauvery Water Management Authority

- The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CMA) was constituted by Union Government on Supreme Court's direction to address the dispute over sharing of river water among Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Puducherry.
- The authority comprises a chairman, eight members besides a secretary. Out of eight members, two each will be full-time and part-time members, while the rest four would be part-time members from states.
- The chairman of the authority should either be a "senior and eminent engineer" with an experience of water resource management and handling of inter-state water dispute or an IAS officer with an experience in water resources management and handling the inter-state dispute. He will have the tenure of five years or until he reaches the age of 65, whichever is earlier.
- The scheme would deal with the issue of water share of the four states in different circumstances like normal and deficient water years in the Cauvery river basin.
- The authority will exercise power and discharge such duty for "sufficient and expedient for securing compliance and implementation" of the Supreme Court order in relation to "storage, apportionment, regulation and control of Cauvery waters".
- The authority will also supervise operation of reservoirs and with regulation of water releases there from with the assistance of regulation committee, the notification said.
- The authority will also look at regulated release of water by Karnataka, at the inter-state contact point presently identified as Billigundulu gauge and discharge station, located on the common border of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
- The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) on 25th June asked Karnataka to release nearly 40.43 thousand million cubic (TMC) feet water to Tamil Nadu for the months of June and July, sources said. The decision is, however, subject to review, depending on the rainfall received by Cauvery basin and the water storage of four reservoirs in Karnataka.

22. Draft National Policy for Domestic Workers

- A draft National Policy on domestic workers is under consideration of the Central Government by the **Ministry of Labour & Employment**. The salient features of the draft policy are as under:-
 - ✓ Inclusion of Domestic Workers in the existing legislations
 - ✓ Domestic workers will have the right to register as workers. Such registration will facilitate their access to rights & benefits accruing to them as workers.
 - ✓ Right to form their own associations, trade unions
 - ✓ Right to have minimum wages, access to social security, protection from abuse, harassment, violence
 - ✓ Right to enhance their professional skills
 - ✓ Protection of Domestic Workers from abuse and exploitation
 - ✓ Domestic Workers to have access to courts, tribunals, etc.
 - ✓ Establishment of a mechanism for regulation of concerned placement agencies
- The Central Government has enacted the **Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008** for providing social security to all unorganised workers including domestic workers.
- The Act provides formulation of social security schemes viz. life and disability cover, health and maternity benefits & old age protection by the central Government.
- The state Government are mandated under the unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008 to formulate suitable welfare schemes for unorganised sector workers including domestic workers relating to provident fund, employment injury benefits housing, education schemes for children, skill up gradation of workers, financial assistance & old age homes.

23. Prison Statistics India 2016 Report

- **Published by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)**
- At the end of 2016, there were 4.33 lakh people in prison; of them 68% were under-trials, or people who have yet to be found guilty of the crimes they are accused of:
 - ✓ India's undertrial population remains among the highest in the world and more than half of all undertrial were detained for less than six months in 2016
 - ✓ The high proportion of undertrials in the overall prison population may be the result of unnecessary arrests and ineffective legal aid during remand hearings
- The rise in the number of people held under administrative (or 'preventative') detention laws in Jammu & Kashmir (a 300% increase) is disturbing
 - ✓ It is used by authorities in J&K and other states to unfairly detain persons without charge or trial and circumvent regular criminal justice procedures
- **Section 436A of Code of Criminal Procedure:** It allows undertrials to be released on a personal bond if they have undergone half of the maximum term of imprisonment they would have faced if convicted

- ✓ Research at Amnesty India has found that prison officials are frequently unaware of this section and unwilling to apply it
- Unnatural deaths in prisons doubled between 2015 and 2016
- Rate of suicide among prisoners also increased by 28%
- ✓ National Human Rights Commission in 2014 stated that on average, a person is one-and-a half times more likely to commit suicide in prison than outside
- Shortcomings:
 - ✓ Failure to include demographic details of religion and the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe status of prisoners
 - ❖ In the earlier reports, when the information was consistently published, it revealed the over-representation of Muslims, Dalits and Adivasis among under-trials in prisons
 - ✓ It doesn't mention the prison visits by official and non-official visitors which typically include district magistrates and judges, social workers and researchers
 - ❖ It is very important in the context of independent monitoring of prisons
 - ❖ Also it is essential to uncover torture and other forms of ill-treatment, increase transparency and balance the power asymmetry in prisons
 - ✓ NCRB has said that about 6013 individuals with mental illness were in jails in 2016
 - ✓ It doesn't provide information on whether they were diagnosed with mental illness before entering prison

24. Leader of Opposition

- The Congress has demanded the post of Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha both as the second largest party in the Lok Sabha and as leader of the United Progressive Alliance which had 92 seats.
- Leader of the Opposition is the leader of the largest party that has not less than a tenth of the total strength of the House.
- The total strength of the Lok Sabha is 545, so any party that has 55 members can get the post.
- The Congress, which is the second largest party in the House after the BJP, has only 52 members, which is three short of the figure.
- The **Salary and Allowances of Leaders of Opposition in Parliament Act, 1977** only says that the largest Opposition party should get the post. "Leader of the Opposition" is the "Leader in that House of the party in opposition to the Government having the greatest numerical strength and recognised as such by the Chairman of the Council of States or the Speaker of the House of the People, as the case may be," says the Act.
- Until 1977, there were no emoluments and perks attached to the position of LoP. There is no provision in the Constitution or even in the Lok Sabha Rules of Procedure in regard to the recognition of the LoP. Right from the first Lok Sabha, the practice has been to recognise the leader of the largest party in Opposition as the LoP provided that party has a strength that is enough to constitute the

quorum for a sitting of the House, or one-tenth of the total membership of the House — at present that comes to 55 members.

- Since there is no constitutional provision, the 1977 law does not provide for the requirement of 55 members as an essential pre-requisite. As it all depends on the Speaker's directions and discretion.
- Way back in the 1950s, the speaker started the practice of recognising parliamentary parties as 'parties' and 'groups' for the limited purpose of allotting seats in the house, time for participating in the debates, rooms in Parliament House etc.
- He issued a direction under which a party is recognised as such only if it had 10% of the strength of the house. A party which had less than 10% members was categorised as a 'group'. But there was no reference to the leader of the opposition in the above direction. It would appear that the people who administered the house rules and directions acted under the erroneous belief that only a party having 10% members can claim the post of leader of opposition.
- The simple way out is to substitute 'pre-poll alliance' for 'party' or say 'party or pre-poll alliance'. In any case, pre-poll alliances are a fact of our political life and are already being extended credibility and legitimacy in the matter of the President and Governors deciding on who to call first for forming the government in cases where no party secures a clear majority support in the House.

25. Article 341

- There was commotion regarding the decision of UP government to shift 17 OBC castes to SC list. The same was held to be against the Constitution by Union Minister as under Article 341 sub-clause (2) of the Constitution, the power to make changes in the SC list rested with Parliament.
- **Articles 341 and 342 of the Constitution of India define as to who would be Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes with respect to any State or Union Territory.** Article 341 (1) states that the President may with respect to any State or Union Territory and where it is a State after consultation with the Governor thereof, by public notification specify the castes, races or tribes or parts of or groups within castes, races or tribes which shall for the purposes of this Constitution be deemed to be Scheduled Castes in relation to that State or Union Territory, as the case may be.
- Article 341 (2) states that the Parliament may by law include in or exclude from the list of Scheduled Castes specified in a notification issued under clause of any caste, race or tribe or part of or group within any caste, race or tribe, but save as aforesaid a notification issued under the said clause shall not be varied by any subsequent notification.

26. Department of Public Enterprises and CPSEs

- Department of Public Enterprises (DPE) is the nodal Department for Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) but there is no CPSE under its direct administrative control. The CPSEs function under various Ministries/ Departments of Govt. of India.
- As per Section-135 of Companies Act, 2013, CSR activities are undertaken by the CPSEs on the recommendations of their CSR Committee and with the approval of Boards of respective CPSEs. All CPSEs qualifying for CSR expenditure are mandated to implement CSR activities/ projects as indicated in Schedule-VII of the Companies Act, 2013 and in pursuance of their CSR policy by

following the procedure as notified by Ministry of Corporate Affairs in Companies (CSR Policy) Rules, 2014.

27. Statistics' Day

- The Government has been celebrating the Statistics Day, to popularize the use of Statistics in everyday life and sensitize the public as to how Statistics helps in shaping and framing policies. It has been designated as one of the Special Days to be celebrated at the national level and is celebrated on the birth anniversary of Prof. P C Mahalanobis, on 29th June, in recognition of his invaluable contribution in establishing the National Statistical System.
- Every year, Statistics Day is celebrated with a theme of current national importance, that runs for a year by way of several workshops and seminars, aimed at bringing about improvements in the selected area. The theme of Statistics Day, 2019 is "Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)". The theme has been chosen for intensive and focused discussions towards filling the data gaps and improvement of timelines/quality in SDGs.

28. Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme (EQUIP)

- In accordance with the decision of the Prime Minister for finalising a five-year vision plan for each Ministry, the Department of Higher Education of HRD Ministry has finalised and released a five-year vision plan named **Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme (EQUIP)**.
- 10 Expert Groups drawn from senior academicians, administrators and industrialists, have suggested more than 50 initiatives that would transform the higher education sector completely. The Groups have set the following goals for higher education sector:
 1. Double the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in higher education and resolve the geographically and socially skewed access to higher education institutions in India
 2. Upgrade the quality of education to global standards
 3. Position at least 50 Indian institutions among the top-1000 global universities
 4. Introduce governance reforms in higher education for well-administered campuses
 5. Accreditation of all institutions as an assurance of quality
 6. Promote Research & Innovation ecosystems for positioning India in the Top-3 countries in the world in matters of knowledge creation
 7. Double the employability of the students passing out of higher education
 8. Harness education technology for expanding the reach and improving pedagogy
 9. Promote India as a global study destination
 10. Achieve a quantum increase in investment in higher education

29. New Policy for Women Empowerment

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development has prepared the **draft National Policy for Women** after considering suggestions/comments received from stakeholders.
- The Draft envisions a society in which, women attain their full potential and are able to participate as equal partners in all spheres of life.
- The draft policy addresses the diverse needs of women through identified priority areas :
 1. Health including food security and nutrition,
 2. Education,
 3. Economy (including agriculture industry, labour, employment, NRI women, soft power, service sector, science and technology), Violence against women,
 4. Governance and decision making
 5. Violence Against Women
 6. Enabling environment (including housing, shelter and infrastructure, drinking water and sanitation, media and culture, sports and social security)
 7. Environment and climate change

30. Establishment of National Council for Vocational Education and Training

- The **Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE)** has notified a **non-statutory regulatory body, the National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET)**, through a Government Notification dated 05.12.2018.
- The NCVET will merge the functions of National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) and National Skill Development Agency (NSDA) and will regulate the functioning of entities engaged in vocational education and training, both long-term and short-term, and establish minimum standards for the functioning of such entities.
- The primary functions of NCVET will include – recognition and regulation of awarding bodies, assessment bodies and skill related information providers; approval of qualifications developed by awarding bodies and Sector Skill Councils (SSCs); indirect regulation of vocational training institutes through awarding bodies and assessment agencies; research and information dissemination; grievance redressal.

31. Foreigners Tribunals

- Foreigners' Tribunals are a key player in the exercise to identify illegal immigrants in Assam, and in focus now ahead of the July 15 publication of the final National Register of Citizens (NRC).
- The Foreigners' Tribunals – 100 existing and 200 more to be functional by September 1 – are quasi-judicial bodies meant to “furnish opinion on the question as to whether a person is or is not a

foreigner within the meaning of **Foreigners Act, 1946**. In 1964, the Centre passed the Foreigners' (Tribunals) Order under provisions of Section 3 of the Act.

- The tribunals get two kinds of cases: those against whom a "reference" has been made by border police, and those whose names in the electoral rolls have a D (Doubtful) against them.
- The accused has to prove he or she is an Indian. "Since the onus is on the person, if he or she is absconding and doesn't appear before the tribunal, the member can pass an ex parte order as per Foreigners' Act.
- Previously, under the Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983, the onus of proving one's nationality or otherwise lay on the complainant. In 2005 (Sarbananda Sonowal vs Union Of India), the Supreme Court struck down the IMDT Act and held that it "has created the biggest hurdle and is the main impediment or barrier in the identification and deportation of illegal migrants".
- Rule 3A of the Foreigners' (Tribunal) Order, 1964, says that if a Tribunal has passed an ex parte order and if the person has "sufficient cause" for non-appearance, the person has to file an application within 30 days of the order. If that happens, the FT member can set aside the ex parte order and decide the case accordingly. This allows FT members to decline to accept an application if filed after 30 days.
- The said order may be reviewed by the Foreigners' Tribunal if sufficient reasons are shown by the proceedee for his absence or for having no knowledge about the cases, within the absence or for having no knowledge about such order.

32. Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN)

- Nagaland government has decided to set up a Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN) with the aim of preventing fake indigenous inhabitants' certificates.
- The RIIN will be the **master list of all indigenous inhabitants of the state** based on "an extensive survey". It will involve official records of indigenous residents from rural and (urban) wards and would be prepared under the supervision of the district administration.
- This provisional list will then be published in all villages, wards and on government websites by September 11, 2019.
- All indigenous inhabitants of the state would be issued a barcoded and numbered Indigenous Inhabitant Certificate.
- The entire exercise will be monitored by the Commissioner of Nagaland. In addition, the state government will designate nodal officers of the rank of a Secretary to the state government. Their role will be to monitor the implementation. However, they will have no say in the adjudication process. Once the RIIN is finalised, no fresh indigenous inhabitant certificates will be issued except to newborn babies born to the indigenous inhabitants of Nagaland
- The process will be conducted across Nagaland and will be done as part of the online system of Inner Line Permit (ILP), which is already in force in Nagaland.

33. Inner Line Permit

- Inner Line Permit (ILP) is an **official travel document required by Indian citizens residing outside certain “protected” states while entering them.**
- The ILP is issued by the Government of India and is obligatory for all those who reside outside the protected states. With the ILP, the government aims to regulate movement to certain areas located near the international border of India.
- ILP’s origin dates back to the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulations, 1873, which protected the British Crown’s interest in tea, oil and elephant trade. It prohibited “British subjects” or Indians from entering into these protected areas.
- After Independence, in 1950, the word “British subjects” was replaced by Citizens of India and the focus of the ban on free movement was explained as a bid to protect tribal cultures in north-eastern India. Currently, the Inner Line Permit is operational in Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram and Nagaland. It can be issued for travel purposes solely.

34. NCRB and Facial Recognition

- The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) released a Request for Proposal for an **Automated Facial Recognition System (AFRS)** to be used by police officers across the country. NCRB, which manages crime data for police, would like to use automated facial recognition to identify criminals, missing people, and unidentified dead bodies, as well as for “crime prevention”.
- AFRS works by maintaining a large database with photos and videos of peoples’ faces. Then, a new image of an unidentified person – often taken from CCTV footage – is compared to the existing database to find a match and identify the person.
- The artificial intelligence technology used for pattern-finding and matching is called “neural networks”.
- On July 1, the Ministry of **Civil Aviation’s “DigiYatra” using facial recognition for airport entry was trialled in the Hyderabad airport.** State governments have also taken their own steps towards facial recognition. Telangana police launched their own system in August 2018.
- The NCRB, which manages crime data for police, would like to use automated facial recognition to identify criminals, missing people, and unidentified dead bodies, as well as for “crime prevention”. Its Request for Proposal calls for gathering CCTV footage, as well as photos from newspapers, raids, and sketches.
- The project is aimed at being compatible with other biometrics such as iris and fingerprints. It will be a mobile and web application hosted in NCRB’s Data Centre in Delhi, but used by all police stations in the country.
- NCRB has proposed integrating this facial recognition system with multiple existing databases. The most prominent is the NCRB-managed Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS). Facial recognition has been proposed in the CCTNS program since its origin.

35. Generic medicines and Drugs and Cosmetics rules

- The Central Government is considering amendments to the **Drugs and Cosmetic Rules, 1945** to ensure that registered medical practitioners dispense only generic medicines.
- A proposal was recently received by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) committee wherein the Drugs Consultative Committee (DCC) was apprised that registered medical practitioners can supply different categories of medicines including vaccines to their patients under the exemption provided, with certain conditions, under Schedule K of the Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945. As of now there are no specified types of medicines which can be supplied by doctors to their patients.
- It is now proposed that registered medical practitioners shall supply generic medicines only and physicians samples shall be supplied free of cost. Generic medicines are unbranded medicines which are equally safe and having the same efficacy as that of branded medicines in terms of their therapeutic value.
- The prices of generic medicines are much cheaper than their branded equivalent. However, because the compounds in the generic versions have the same molecular structure as the brand-name version, their quality is essentially the same.
- **‘Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana’** is a campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. Of India, to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses through special kendra’s known as Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra.
- Bureau of Pharma PSUs of India (BPPI) is the implementing agency of PMBJP. BPPI (Bureau of Pharma Public Sector Undertakings of India) has been established under the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Govt. of India, with the support of all the CPSUs.

36. Surrogacy Bill

- The Cabinet has approved the introduction of Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019 that aims to prohibit commercial surrogacy in India.
- The Bill proposes to regulate surrogacy in India by establishing a National Surrogacy Board at the central level and state surrogacy boards and appropriate authorities in the state and Union Territories.
- The purpose of the Bill is to ensure effective regulation of surrogacy, prohibit commercial surrogacy, and allow ethical surrogacy. While commercial surrogacy will be prohibited, including sale and purchase of human embryos and gametes, ethical surrogacy for needy couples will be allowed on fulfilment of stipulated conditions.
- It will also prevent exploitation of surrogate mothers and children born through surrogacy. There will not be any financial implications, except for the meetings of the National and State Surrogacy Boards and appropriate authorities, which will be met out of the administrative budgets of respective departments.
- The 228th report of the Law Commission of India has recommended prohibiting commercial surrogacy and allowing altruistic surrogacy by enacting suitable legislation. The Bill includes

contracting a 'close relative' as a surrogate by a heterosexual married couple who have been childless for five years of their marriage.

37. UNESCO Education Report on CWDs

- The 2019 “**State of the Education Report for India: Children with Disabilities**” has been released by the UNESCO. The report highlights accomplishments and challenges with regards to the right to education of children with disabilities (CWDs).
- There are 78,64,636 children with disability in India constituting 1.7% of the total child population. Three-fourths of the children with disabilities at the age of five years and one-fourth between 5-19 years do not go to any educational institution.
- The number of children enrolled in school drops significantly with each successive level of schooling. There are fewer girls with disabilities in schools than boys with disabilities in schools.
- A large number of children with disabilities do not go to regular schools but are enrolled at the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS). The percentage of children attending schools is the lowest among those with multiple disabilities, mental illnesses and mental retardation.
- Significant gaps remain, even though successive government schemes and programs have brought large numbers of children with disabilities into schools. Only 61 percent of CWDs aged between 5 and 19 were attending an educational institution compared to the overall figure of 71 percent when all children are considered.
- Around 12 percent of CWDs dropped out of school, which is comparable with the overall percentage of dropouts among all children. 27 percent of CWDs never attended any educational institution, as opposed to the overall figure of 17 percent when the entire child population is taken into account. A review of enrolment figures at NIOS shows a decline for most categories of disabilities between 2009 and 2015.

38. Swadesh Darshan scheme

- Recognizing the potential of rural tourism in the country, the Tourism Ministry has identified **Rural Circuit as one of the thematic circuits identified for development under this scheme and is aimed at leveraging tourism as a force multiplier for revitalizing the rural economy** and for giving both domestic and international tourists a glimpse of the rural aspect of the country.
- It will be 100% centrally funded for the project components undertaken for public funding.
- To leverage the voluntary funding available for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Central Public Sector Undertakings and corporate sector.
- Funding of individual project will vary from state to state and will be finalised on the basis of detailed project reports prepared by PMC (Programme Management Consultant).
- PMC will be a national level consultant to be appointed by the Mission Directorate. A National Steering Committee (NSC) will be constituted with Minister in charge of M/O Tourism as Chairman, to steer the mission objectives and vision of the scheme.
- A Mission Directorate headed by the Member Secretary, NSC as a nodal officer will help in identification of projects in consultation with the States/ UTs governments and other stake holders.

39. Creamy Layer formula for OBCs

- The Creamy Layer formula for Other Backward Classes (OBCs) employed with the State Governments, Central Government, Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and banks, for the purpose of their employment in Central Government jobs and admission to Central Government educational institutions is at present covered by the instructions of Department of Personnel and Training dated 08.09.1993 and 14.10.2004 and Department of Public Enterprises and the Department of Financial Services, vide Office Memorandum dated 25.10.2017 and 06.12.2017, respectively.
- **An Expert Committee has been constituted by the Government of India under the Chairmanship of Shri B.P. Sharma** (former Secretary, DOPT) on 08.03.2019 to examine the issues related to Creamy layer equivalence among the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBCs). The Committee is expected to submit its report anytime soon.

40. Transgender Bill

- An Expert Committee was constituted in the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment to make an in-depth study of the problems being faced by the Transgender Community and suggest suitable measures to ameliorate their conditions on 16th July. There were four representatives from the Transgender community, on the Committee.
- The Bill provides for '**self-perceived gender identity**' i.e. persons can determine their gender on their own. This is in line with a Supreme Court judgement (2014) which held that the self determination of one's gender is part of the fundamental right to dignity, freedom and personal autonomy guaranteed under the Constitution.
- Along with the provision on 'self-perceived gender identity', the Bill also provides for a **screening process to obtain a Certificate of Identity**.
- This Certificate will certify the person as 'transgender'. An application for obtaining such a Certificate will be referred to a District Screening Committee which will comprise five members including a medical officer, psychologist or psychiatrist, and a representative of the transgender community.
- The Bill specifies certain offences which include:
 - (i) compelling transgender persons to beg or do forced or bonded labour, and
 - (ii) physical, sexual, verbal, emotional or economic abuse.
- These offences will attract imprisonment between six months and two years, in addition to a fine.
- The Transgender Bill, 2018 was approved by the Union cabinet. In the 2019 version of the Bill, contentious provision that criminalised begging by transgender people has been removed from the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019, which was cleared by the Union Cabinet last week.
- Another provision that made transgender people subject themselves to certification by a district screening committee to be acknowledged as a transgender, has also been struck out.

41. Bill for Resident Doctors

- The Central Government has constituted a Committee to examine various aspects of a uniform legislative framework to address issues of assault on clinical establishments and doctors on duty.
- As per Constitutional provisions, 'Health' is a State subject. It is the primary responsibility of the respective State / Union Territory (UT) Government to prescribe norms for fixing working hours for the doctors and other medical practitioners working in their hospitals. As such, no information in this regard is centrally maintained.

42. 15th Finance Commission- Changes

- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi has approved the proposed amendment to enable Fifteenth Finance Commission to address serious concerns regarding the allocation of adequate, secure and non-lapsable funds for defence and internal security of India.
- Under the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Commission, it is proposed to ensure an assured allocation of resources towards defence and internal security imperatives.
- The amendment provides that Fifteenth Finance Commission shall also examine whether a separate mechanism for funding of defence and internal security ought to be set up and if so how such a mechanism could be operationalized.

43. NIA (Amendment) Bill, 2019

- The Lok Sabha passed the National Investigation Agency (Amendment) Bill, 2019. NIA is a central agency established by the Indian Government to combat terror in India. It acts as the Central Counter Terrorism Law Enforcement Agency.
- The agency is empowered to deal with terror related crimes across states without special permission from the states. The Agency came into existence with the enactment of the National Investigation Agency Act 2008 in the aftermath of the Mumbai Terror Attacks.

There are three major amendments to the National Investigation Agency (NIA) Act of 2008:

- The first change is the type of offences that the NIA can investigate and prosecute. Under the existing Act, the NIA can investigate offences under Acts such as the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967.
- The latest amendments will enable the NIA to additionally investigate offences related to human trafficking, counterfeit currency, manufacture or sale of prohibited arms, cyber-terrorism, and offences under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908.
- The second change pertains to NIA's jurisdiction. Under the Act, for the offences under its purview, NIA officers have the same power as other police officers and these extend across the country.
- The Bill amends this to give NIA officers the power to investigate offences committed outside India. Of course, NIA's jurisdiction will be subject to international treaties and domestic laws of other countries.

- The third change relates to the special trials courts for the offences that come under NIA's purview or the so-called "scheduled offences". The existing Act allows the Centre to constitute special courts for NIA's trials. But the Bill enables the Central government to designate sessions courts as special courts for such trials.

44. Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Bill, 2019

- The Union Cabinet has approved for introduction of the Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Bill, 2019 in the Parliament. This proposal would enhance the coverage of the safety, health and working conditions provisions manifold as compared to the present scenario.
- The decision will enhance the coverage of the safety, health and working conditions provisions manifold as compared to the present scenario.

The New Code has been drafted after amalgamation, simplification and rationalisation of the relevant provisions of the 13 Central Labour Acts:

- The Factories Act, 1948;
- The Mines Act, 1952; The Dock Workers (Safety, Health and Welfare) Act, 1986;
- The Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996;
- The Plantations Labour Act, 1951;
- The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970;
- The Inter-State Migrant workmen (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1979;
- The Working Journalist and other Newspaper Employees (Conditions of Service and Misc. Provision) Act, 1955;
- The Working Journalist (Fixation of rates of wages) Act, 1958;
- The Motor Transport Workers Act, 1961;
- Sales Promotion Employees (Condition of Service) Act, 1976;
- The Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966; and
- The Cine Workers and Cinema Theatre Workers Act, 1981. After the enactment of the Code, all these Acts being subsumed in the Code will be repealed

Benefits

- Safety, Health, welfare and improved Working Conditions are pre-requisite for well-being of the worker and also for economic growth of the country as healthy workforce of the country would be more productive and occurrence of less accidents and unforeseen incidents would be economically beneficial to the employers also. With the ultimate aim of extending the safety and healthy working conditions to all workforce of the country, the Code enhances the ambit of provisions of safety, health, welfare and working conditions from existing about 9 major sectors to all establishments having 10 or more employees.

45. Model Tenancy Act (MTA)

- The **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs** has drafted a '**Model Tenancy Act**', 2019 which envisages to balance the interest and rights of both the owner and tenant and to create an accountable and transparent ecosystem for renting the premises in disciplined and efficient manner. It will enable creation of adequate rental housing stock for various income segments of society including migrants, formal and informal sector workers, professionals, students etc. and increase access to quality rented accommodation, enable gradual formalisation of rental housing market.
- MTA stipulates a robust grievance redressal mechanism comprising of Rent Authority, Rent Court and Rent Tribunal.
- It has been proposed to cap the security deposit equal to a maximum of two month's rent in case of residential properties and, minimum of one month's rent in case of non-residential property.
- After coming into force of this Act, no person shall let or take on rent any premises except by an agreement in writing.
- The Model Act provides for its applicability for the whole of the State i.e. urban as well as rural areas in the State.
- Within two months of executing rental agreement both landowner and tenant are required to intimate to the Rent Authority about the agreement and within seven days a unique identification number will be issued by the Rent Authority to the both the parties.
- A digital platform will be set up in the local vernacular language of the State for submitting tenancy agreement and other documents.
- The copy of the draft Model Tenancy Act, 2019 has been uploaded on the website of this Ministry for seeking comments from the public and other stakeholders latest by 01/08/2019.
- A copy of the draft Act has also been shared with the States/UTs for seeking their views/comments.
- Once finalized the Model Act will be shared with the States/Union Territory (UTs) for adoption.
- As per Census 2011, nearly 1.1 crore houses were lying vacant in the country and making these houses available on rent will complement the vision of 'Housing for All' by 2022.

46. Operation Thirst

- To curb the menace of **unauthorised PDW (PACKAGED DRINKING WATER)** in Railway premises, an all India drive named "Operation Thirst" was launched on 08th & 09th July 2019 under the Ministry of Railways.

47. Swadhar Greh Scheme

- The Ministry of Women and Child Development is implementing the **Swadhar Greh Scheme for rehabilitation of women in difficult circumstances**.
- The scheme covers women who are deserted and without any social and economic support, women victims of domestic violence, family tension and natural disaster.

- Besides the above, Ministry of Women and Child Development is also implementing Universalisation of Women Helpline Scheme which is envisaged to provide 24 hours emergency and non-emergency response to women affected by violence, both in public and private spaces by linking them with appropriate authorities such as police, One Stop Centres, hospital and legal services.
- Under the 'One Stop Centre Scheme', One Stop Centres for violence affected women across the country as part of the Nirbhaya Framework, are established with the help of States/UTs for providing legal and psycho-social counseling along with other facilities including temporary shelter, police facilitation and medical support to the women needing the same under one roof in an integrated manner.

48. Whip

- The **Office of Whip** is a purely British Institution. The Whips are not officially recognised in the standing orders of the House of Commons or the House of Lords. but long tradition has given them a secure place in the parliamentary machine
- According to Dr. Radha Kumud Mookerji the working of Buddhist Sangha shows that there existed the whip who was called Ganapuraka
- It is an official of a political party whose task is to ensure party discipline in a legislature
 - ✓ This usually means ensuring that members of the party vote according to the party platform, rather than according to their own individual ideology or the will of their constituents
- They are the party's "enforcers", and ensure their fellow legislators attend voting sessions and vote according to official party policy
- A whip is a directive from the party that binds party members of a House to obey the line of the party
- There are three kinds of whip
 - ✓ A one line whip is issued to inform the members about the vote
 - ✓ a two line whip is issued to inform the members to be present inside the House at the time of the vote
 - ✓ a three line whip is issued directing members to vote according to the party line
- In India, the three-line whip can be violated only if one-third of the legislators of a party decide to cast their vote against the party line
- Though the office of the whip is not officially recognised in the standing orders, there has been a long tradition to give them a place in the Parliamentary form of government
- The whip plays a crucial role in ensuring the smooth and efficient conduct of business on the floor of the House
- The whip is an MP drawn from the party that is in power and also from the party that sits on the opposition bench

Role

- Whip's main duty is to look after the members of the party and keep them together inside the Parliament
- Maintain discipline of the party on the floor of the House
- It is also the duty of the chief whip to maintain discipline of the party on the floor of the House. Besides, he is responsible for keeping MPs, especially Ministers, informed of opinion in the party on the moods of individual members. It is the chief whip who identify the signs of disaffection or discontent among the MPs and keeps the Prime Minister updated about the views.
- A whip is a shock absorber
- He/She can't take part in debates and discussions inside the House
- Besides playing the role of an adviser to the party leaders, the chief whip is also a counsellor of members – thus a binding-force in the party
- If an MP violates his party's whip, she/he faces expulsion from the House under the Anti-Defection Act

Position in India

- The Minister of Parliamentary Affairs is the Chief Whip of Government. He is directly responsible to the Leader of the House
- It is a part of his duties to advise the Government on Parliamentary business and to maintain a close liaison with the Ministers in regard to parliamentary business affecting their Departments
 - ✓ They are vital in maintaining the links between the internal organisation of party inside the Parliament
- The Chief Whip controls the members of the party in power and ensures that during sittings there is quorum in the House and that adequate number of members of the party are present at the time of voting
- The member who votes or abstains from voting contrary to the Whip of the Party, runs the risk of losing his seat in the House under the 52nd Amendment of the Constitution. As such the Whip as a document which is called "Direction" of the party in the Constitution has assumed great significance. A process which originated as an informal arrangement has now assumed a constitutional status in India

49. Anti-Defection Law

- Aaya Ram Gaya Ram was a phrase that became popular in Indian politics after a Haryana MLA Gaya Lal changed his party thrice within the same day in 1967
 - ✓ The anti-defection law sought to prevent such political defections which may be due to reward of office or other similar considerations
- The **Tenth Schedule** was inserted in the Constitution in 1985. It lays down the process by which legislators may be disqualified on grounds of defection by the Presiding Officer of a legislature based on a petition by any other member of the House

- A legislator is deemed to have defected if he either voluntarily gives up the membership of his party or disobeys the directives of the party leadership on a vote. This implies that a legislator defying (abstaining or voting against) the party whip on any issue can lose his membership of the House.
- The law applies to both Parliament and state assemblies

Exceptions

- Legislators may change their party without the risk of disqualification in certain circumstances
- The law allows a party to merge with or into another party provided that at least two-thirds of its legislators are in favour of the merger. In such a scenario, neither the members who decide to merge, nor the ones who stay with the original party will face disqualification
- The law does not specify a time-period for the Presiding Officer to decide on a disqualification plea. Given that courts can intervene only after the Presiding Officer has decided on the matter, the petitioner seeking disqualification has no option but to wait for this decision to be made
- The law provides for a member to be disqualified if he 'voluntarily gives up his membership'
 - ✓ Only the Speaker has the discretion to decide whether the resignations were voluntary or genuine. No other constitutional authority can decide this.
 - ✓ However, the Supreme Court has interpreted that in the absence of a formal resignation by the member, the giving up of membership can be inferred by his conduct
- The law initially stated that the decision of the Presiding Officer is not subject to judicial review. This condition was struck down by the Supreme Court in 1992, thereby allowing appeals against the Presiding Officer's decision in the High Court and Supreme Court. However, it held that there may not be any judicial intervention until the Presiding Officer gives his order

50. NHRC Amendment Bill

- Lok Sabha passed a bill to amend the Protection of Human Rights Act 1993

Features

- It allows for all former Supreme Court judges and not just former Chief Justices of India, to be appointed to the chairperson's post of the NHRC
 - ✓ Currently only a retired CJI can head the Commission, while a former high court judge can be the head of state human rights body
- It proposes the appointment of three instead of two human rights experts including one woman, to the commission as well as that of chairpersons of commissions such as the National Commission for SCs. National Commission for STs and National Commission for Women as members of NHRC
- It reduces the term of chairpersons of the national and state human rights bodies to three years from the existing five years
- It also removes the five-year limit for reappointment of members to the commission

Criticism

- Opposition member Shashi Tharoor alleges that there are several gaps and the bill fails to bring autonomy to the human rights bodies
- In case a Chief Justice is available, will he/she be overlooked in favour of another Judge

51. Right to Information (Amendment) Bill 2019

- It seeks to take away the status of the information commissioner which is equivalent to election commissioners and empower the Centre to fix their salaries and service conditions
- The government said the bill aimed at institutionalisation, streamlining and ease of delivery of the Right to Information Act

RTI Act 2005

- Under the act, Public Authorities are required to make disclosures on various aspects of their structure and functioning, including
 - ✓ disclosure on their organisation, functions and structure
 - ✓ powers, duties of its officers and employees
 - ✓ financial information
- The intent behind the act is to promote transparency and accountability in the working of Public Authorities
- Public Authorities include bodies of self-government established under the Constitution, or under any law or government notification such as Ministries, PSUs and regulators
- It also includes entities owned, controlled or substantially financed and non-government organisations substantially financed directly or indirectly by funds provided by the government
- The Act has established a three tier structure for enforcing the RTI guaranteed under the Act
 - ✓ Public Authorities designate some of their officers as Public Information Officers – provide information within 30 days of the request
 - ✓ Appeals from their decisions go to an Appellate Authority
 - ✓ Appeals from Appellate Authority go to the State Information Commission or the CIC

52. Changes proposed under the Amendment Act

- Earlier the Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners at Union and State level, held office for a term of five years
 - ✓ The Bill removes this provision and states that the union government will notify the term of office for the CIC and the ICs
- The salary of the CIC and ICs at Central level will be equivalent to that of Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners and that at the state level be equivalent to the Election Commissioners and Chief Secretary to the state governments

- ✓ The Bill states that the salaries and allowances and other terms and conditions of service of the central and state CIC and ICs will be determined by the central government
- The Act states that at the time of the appointment of the CIC and ICs, if they are receiving any pension or any other retirement benefits for previous government service, their salaries will be reduced by an amount equal to the pension
 - ✓ The bill removes these provisions
- Key features of the Bill include:
 - Term of Information Commissioners: Under the Act, Chief Information Commissioner (CIC) and Information Commissioners (ICs) are appointed at the national and state level to implement the provisions of the Act. The Act states that the CIC and other ICs (appointed at the central and state level) will hold office for a term of five years. The Bill removes this provision and states that the central government will notify the term of office for the CIC and the ICs.
 - Determination of salary: The 2005 Act states that the salary of the CIC and ICs (at the central level) will be equivalent to the salary paid to the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners, respectively. Similarly, the salary of the CIC and ICs (at the state level) will be equivalent to the salary paid to the Election Commissioners and the Chief Secretary to the state government, respectively.
 - The Bill seeks to amend these provisions to state that the salaries, allowances, and other terms and conditions of service of the central and state CIC and ICs will be determined by the central government.
 - Deductions in salary: The Act states that at the time of the appointment of the CIC and ICs (at the central and state level), if they are receiving pension or any other retirement benefits for previous government service, their salaries will be reduced by an amount equal to the pension.
 - Previous government service includes service under:
 - ✓ the central government,
 - ✓ state government,
 - ✓ corporation established under a central or state law, and
 - ✓ government company owned or controlled by the central or state government.
- The Bill removes these provisions.

53. The Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2019

- The Parliament passed the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Bill, 2019 that makes all declaration of talaq, including in written or electronic form, to be void (i.e. not enforceable in law) and illegal. It defines talaq as talaq-e-biddat or any other similar form of talaq pronounced by a Muslim man resulting in instant and irrevocable divorce. Talaq-e-biddat refers to the practice under Muslim personal laws where pronouncement of the word 'talaq' thrice in one sitting by a Muslim man to his wife results in an instant and irrevocable divorce.

- The Bill makes declaration of talaq a cognizable offence, attracting up to three years' imprisonment with a fine. (A cognizable offence is one for which a police officer may arrest an accused person without warrant.) The offence will be cognizable only if information relating to the offence is given by:
 - ✓ the married woman (against whom talaq has been declared), or
 - ✓ any person related to her by blood or marriage.
- The Bill provides that the Magistrate may grant bail to the accused. The bail may be granted only after hearing the woman (against whom talaq has been pronounced), and if the Magistrate is satisfied that there are reasonable grounds for granting bail.
- The offence may be compounded by the Magistrate upon the request of the woman (against whom talaq has been declared). Compounding refers to the procedure where the two sides agree to stop legal proceedings, and settle the dispute. The terms and conditions of the compounding of the offence will be determined by the Magistrate.
- A Muslim woman against whom talaq has been declared, is entitled to seek subsistence allowance from her husband for herself and for her dependent children. The amount of the allowance will be determined by the Magistrate.
- Custody: A Muslim woman against whom such talaq has been declared, is entitled to seek custody of her minor children. The manner of custody will be determined by the Magistrate.

54. National Medical Commission Bill, 2019

- The **Medical Council of India (MCI)** is responsible for regulating medical education and practice. Over the years, there have been several issues with the functioning of the MCI with respect to its regulatory role, composition, allegations of corruption, and lack of accountability.
- For example, MCI is an elected body where its members are elected by medical practitioners themselves, i.e., the regulator is elected by the regulated. Experts have recommended nomination based constitution of the MCI instead of election, and separating the regulation of medical education and medical practice. They suggested that legislative changes should be brought in to overhaul the functioning of the MCI.
- To meet this objective, the Bill repeals the Indian Medical Council Act, 1956 and dissolves the current MCI.
- The 2019 Bill sets up the National Medical Commission (NMC) as an umbrella regulatory body with certain other bodies under it. The NMC will subsume the MCI and will regulate medical education and practice in India. Under the Bill, states will establish their respective State Medical Councils within three years. These Councils will have a role similar to the NMC, at the state level.
- Functions of the NMC include:
 - ✓ laying down policies for regulating medical institutions and medical professionals,
 - ✓ assessing the requirements of human resources and infrastructure in healthcare,
 - ✓ ensuring compliance by the State Medical Councils with the
 - ✓ regulations made under the Bill, and

- ✓ framing guidelines for determination of fee for up to 50% of the seats in the private medical institutions.

Who will be a part of the NMC?

- The Bill replaces the MCI with the NMC, whose members will be nominated. The NMC will consist of 25 members, including:
 - ✓ Director Generals of the Directorate General of Health Services and the Indian Council of Medical Research,
 - ✓ Director of any of the AIIMS,
 - ✓ five members (part-time) to be elected by the registered medical practitioners, and
 - ✓ six members appointed on rotational basis from amongst the nominees of the states in the Medical Advisory Council.
- Of these 25 members, at least 15 (60%) are medical practitioners. The MCI has been noted to be non-diverse and consists mostly of doctors who look out for their own self-interest over public interest. In order to reduce the monopoly of doctors, it has been recommended by experts that the MCI should include diverse stakeholders such as public health experts, social scientists, and health economists.

What are the regulatory bodies being set up under the NMC?

- The Bill sets up four autonomous boards under the supervision of the NMC. Each board will consist of a President and four members (of which two members will be part-time), appointed by the central government (on the recommendation of a search committee). These bodies are:
- The Under-Graduate Medical Education Board (UGMEB) and the Post-Graduate Medical Education Board (PGMEB): These two bodies will be responsible for formulating standards, curriculum, guidelines for medical education, and granting recognition to medical qualifications at the under-graduate and post-graduate levels respectively.
- The Medical Assessment and Rating Board: The Board will have the power to levy monetary penalties on institutions which fail to maintain the minimum standards as laid down by the UGMEB and the PGMEB. It will also grant permissions for establishing new medical colleges, starting postgraduate courses, and increasing the number of seats in a medical college.
- The Ethics and Medical Registration Board: This Board will maintain a National Register of all the licensed medical practitioners in the country, and also regulate professional and medical conduct. Only those included in the Register will be allowed to practice as doctors. The Board will also maintain a register of all licensed community health providers in the country.

How is the Bill changing the eligibility guidelines for doctors to practice medicine?

- There will be a uniform National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test for admission to under-graduate and post-graduate super-speciality medical education in all medical institutions regulated under the Bill. Further, the Bill introduces a common final year undergraduate examination called the National Exit Test for students graduating from medical institutions to obtain the license for practice.
- This test will also serve as the basis for admission into post-graduate courses at medical institutions under this Bill. Foreign medical practitioners may be permitted temporary registration to practice in India. However, the Bill does not specify the validity period of this license to practice.

How will the issues of medical misconduct be addressed?

- The State Medical Council will receive complaints relating to professional or ethical misconduct against a registered medical practitioner. If the medical practitioner is aggrieved of a decision of the State Medical Council, he may appeal to the Ethics and Medical Registration Board.
- If the medical practitioner is aggrieved of the decision of the Board, he can approach the NMC to appeal against the decision.

How does the Bill regulate community health providers?

- As of January 2018, the doctor to population ratio in India was 1:1655 compared to the World Health Organisation standard of 1:1000. To fill in the gaps of availability of medical professionals, the Bill provides for the NMC to grant limited license to certain mid-level practitioners called community health providers, connected with the modern medical profession to practice medicine.
- These mid-level medical practitioners may prescribe specified medicines in primary and preventive healthcare. However, in any other cases, these practitioners may only prescribe medicine under the supervision of a registered medical practitioner.

55. Jammu & Kashmir

- Union Minister for Home Affairs, Shri Amit Shah, introduced two bills and two resolutions regarding Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) in Lok Sabha on August 6, 2019. These are as follows:
 1. Constitution (Application to Jammu & Kashmir) Order, 2019 {Ref. Article 370(1) of Constitution of India} – issued by President of India to supersede the 1954 order related to Article 370.
 2. Resolution for Repeal of Article 370 of the Constitution of India {Ref. Article 370 (3)}
 3. Jammu & Kashmir (Reorganisation) Bill, 2019 {Ref. Article 3 of Constitution of India}
 4. Jammu & Kashmir Reservation (2nd Amendment) Bill, 2019 {Home Minister withdrew the Bill from both Houses as the provisions of this act would become applicable to J&K once article 370 gets repealed and the laws of Union of India become applicable there}
- Article 370 of the Constitution is a 'temporary provision' which promises to grant autonomous status to Jammu and Kashmir and limits Parliament's powers to make laws for the state under Part XXI of the Constitution.
- Notwithstanding anything in the Constitution, the Article limits Parliament's powers to make laws to those matters in the Union and Concurrent Lists, in consultation with the state government, as declared by the President, which should correspond with matters



specified under of Instrument of Accession, the statute says. It also lays down that only two Articles of the Constitution will apply to Jammu and Kashmir – Article 1 which defines India and Article 370 itself. The provision was included in the Constitution on 17 October, 1949.

- Article 370(3) provides President of India has the powers to amend or repeal the article by issuing a notification, based on a recommendation of Constituent Assembly of J&K. President of India signed the Constitution Order 2019 regarding Article 370(1), under which all the provision under article 4 would be applicable to J&K. J&K constituent assembly would be read as J&K Legislative Assembly. Since President's rule is in force in the state, implementation of article 370 would cease to exist when President of India issues the notification in this regard.

56. The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Bill, 2019

- The Bill provides for reorganisation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir into the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir and Union Territory of Ladakh.
- Reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir: The Bill reorganises the state of Jammu and Kashmir into: (i) the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir with a legislature, and (ii) the Union Territory of Ladakh without a legislature. The Union Territory of Ladakh will comprise Kargil and Leh districts, and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will comprise the remaining territories of the existing state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- Lieutenant Governor: The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will be administered by the President, through an administrator appointed by him known as the Lieutenant Governor. The Union Territory of Ladakh will be administered by the President, through a Lieutenant Governor appointed by him.
- Legislative Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir: The Bill provides for a Legislative Assembly for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. The total number of seats in the Assembly will be 107. Of these, 24 seats will remain vacant on account of certain areas of Jammu and Kashmir being under the occupation of Pakistan. Further, seats will be reserved in the Assembly for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir. In addition, the Lieutenant Governor may nominate two members to the Legislative Assembly to give representation to women, if they are not adequately represented.
- The Assembly will have a term of five years, and the Lieutenant Governor must summon the Assembly at least once in six months. The Legislative Assembly may make laws for any part of the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir related to: (i) any matters specified in the State List of the Constitution, except "Police" and "Public Order", and (ii) any matter in the Concurrent List applicable to Union Territories. Further, Parliament will have the power to make laws in relation to any matter for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
- **Council of Ministers:** The Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will have a Council of Ministers of not more than ten percent of the total number of members in the Assembly. The Council will aide and advise the Lieutenant Governor on matters that the Assembly has powers to make laws. The Chief Minister will communicate all decisions of the Council to the Lieutenant Governor.
- **High Court:** The High Court of Jammu and Kashmir will be the common High Court for the Union Territories of Ladakh, and Jammu and Kashmir. Further, the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir will have an Advocate General to provide legal advice to the government of the Union Territory.

- **Legislative Council:** The Legislative Council of the state of Jammu and Kashmir will be abolished. Upon dissolution, all Bills pending in the Council will lapse.
- **Advisory Committees:** The central government will appoint Advisory Committees, for various purposes, including:
 - ✓ distribution of assets and liabilities of corporations of the state of Jammu and Kashmir between the two Union Territories,
 - ✓ issues related to the generation and supply of electricity and water, and
 - ✓ issues related to the Jammu and Kashmir State Financial Corporation. These Committees must submit their reports within six months to the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, who must act on these recommendations within 30 days.
- **Extent of laws:** The Schedule lists 106 central laws that will be made applicable to Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh on a date notified by the central government. These include the Aadhaar Act, 2016, the Indian Penal Code, 1860, and the Right to Education Act, 2009. Further, it repeals 153 state laws of Jammu and Kashmir. In addition, 166 state laws will remain in force, and seven laws will be applicable with amendments. These amendments include lifting of prohibitions on lease of land to persons who are not permanent residents of Jammu and Kashmir.



57. Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, 2019

- The Bill amends the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. The Act provides special procedures to deal with terrorist activities, among other things. It got Parliamentary approval in August 2019.
- Under the Act, the central government may designate an organisation as a terrorist organisation if it:
 - ✓ commits or participates in acts of terrorism,
 - ✓ prepares for terrorism,
 - ✓ promotes terrorism, or
 - ✓ is otherwise involved in terrorism. The Bill additionally empowers the government to designate individuals as terrorists on the same grounds.
- Under the Act, an investigating officer is required to obtain the prior approval of the Director General of Police to seize properties that may be connected with terrorism. The Bill adds that if the investigation is conducted by an officer of the National Investigation Agency (NIA), the approval of the Director General of NIA would be required for seizure of such property.
- Under the Act, investigation of cases may be conducted by officers of the rank of Deputy Superintendent or Assistant Commissioner of Police or above. The Bill additionally empowers the officers of the NIA, of the rank of Inspector or above, to investigate cases.
- The Act defines terrorist acts to include acts committed within the scope of any of the treaties listed in a schedule to the Act. The Schedule lists nine treaties, including the Convention for the Suppression of Terrorist Bombings (1997), and the Convention against Taking of Hostages (1979). The Bill adds

another treaty to the list. This is the International Convention for Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism (2005).

58. The Consumer Protection Bill, 2019

- The Consumer Protection Bill, 2019 replaces the Consumer Protection Act, 1986. Key features of the Bill include:
- A consumer is defined as a person who buys any good or avails a service for a consideration. It does not include a person who obtains a good for resale or a good or service for commercial purpose. It covers transactions through all modes including offline, and online through electronic means, teleshopping, multi-level marketing or direct selling.
- Rights of consumers: Six consumer rights have been defined in the Bill, including the right to:
 - ✓ be protected against marketing of goods and services which are hazardous to life and property;
 - ✓ be informed of the quality, quantity, potency, purity, standard and price of goods or services;
 - ✓ be assured of access to a variety of goods or services at competitive prices; and
 - ✓ seek redressal against unfair or restrictive trade practices.
- Central Consumer Protection Authority: The central government will set up a Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) to promote, protect and enforce the rights of consumers. It will regulate matters related to violation of consumer rights, unfair trade practices, and misleading advertisements. The CCPA will have an investigation wing, headed by a Director-General, which may conduct inquiry or investigation into such violations. The Bill also envisages simplified dispute resolution process, has provision for Mediation and e-filing of cases. The Consumer will be able to file cases in the nearest commission under the jurisdiction of which he resides.
- CCPA will carry out the following functions, including:
 - ✓ inquiring into violations of consumer rights, investigating and launching prosecution at the appropriate forum;
 - ✓ passing orders to recall goods or withdraw services that are hazardous, reimbursement of the price paid, and discontinuation of the unfair trade practices, as defined in the Bill;
 - ✓ issuing directions to the concerned trader/manufacturer/endorser/advertiser/publisher to either discontinue a false or misleading advertisement, or modify it;
 - ✓ imposing penalties, and;
 - ✓ issuing safety notices to consumers against unsafe goods and services.
- The CCPA may impose a penalty on a manufacturer or an endorser of up to Rs 10 lakh and imprisonment for up to two years for a false or misleading advertisement. In case of a subsequent offence, the fine may extend to Rs 50 lakh and imprisonment of up to five years.
- CCPA can also prohibit the endorser of a misleading advertisement from endorsing that particular product or service for a period of up to one year. For every subsequent offence, the period of prohibition may extend to three years. However, there are certain exceptions when an endorser will not be held liable for such a penalty.

- Consumer Disputes Redressal Commissions (CDRCs) will be set up at the district, state, and national levels. A consumer can file a complaint with CDRCs in relation to:
 - ✓ unfair or restrictive trade practices;
 - ✓ defective goods or services;
 - ✓ overcharging or deceptive charging; and
 - ✓ the offering of goods or services for sale which may be hazardous to life and safety.
- Complaints against an unfair contract can be filed with only the State and National. Appeals from a District CDRC will be heard by the State CDRC. Appeals from the State CDRC will be heard by the National CDRC. Final appeal will lie before the Supreme Court.
- The District CDRC will entertain complaints where value of goods and services does not exceed Rs one crore. The State CDRC will entertain complaints when the value is more than Rs one crore but does not exceed Rs 10 crore. Complaints with value of goods and services over Rs 10 crore will be entertained by the National CDRC.
- For the first time there will be an exclusive law dealing with Product Liability. Product liability means the liability of a product manufacturer, service provider or seller to compensate a consumer for any harm or injury caused by a defective good or deficient service. To claim compensation, a consumer has to prove any one of the conditions for defect or deficiency, as given in the Bill.

59. National Digital Health Blueprint Report

- In order to fulfil the vision of National Health Policy 2017, the Committee constituted by the Health Ministry to create an implementation framework for the National Health Stack (NHS), has come up with the National Digital Health Blueprint after surveying the global best practices in adoption of digital technologies holistically.

60. KABIL

- A joint venture company namely Khanij Bidesh India Ltd. (KABIL) is to be set up with the participation of three Central Public Sector Enterprises namely, National Aluminium Company Ltd.(NALCO), Hindustan Copper Ltd.(HCL) and Mineral Exploration Company Ltd. (MECL).
- The objective of constituting KABIL is to ensure a consistent supply of critical and strategic minerals to Indian domestic market. While KABIL would ensure mineral security of the Nation, it would also help in realizing the overall objective of import substitution. KABIL would carry out identification, acquisition, exploration, development, mining and processing of strategic minerals overseas for commercial use and meeting country's requirement of these minerals.
- The new company will help in building partnerships with other mineral rich countries like Australia and those in Africa and South America, where Indian expertise in exploration and mineral processing will be mutually beneficial bringing about new economic opportunities. The equity participation between NALCO, HCL and MECL is in the ratio of 40:30:30.

61. The Protection of Human Rights (Amendment) Bill, 2019

- The 2019 Amendment Bill amends the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993. The Act provides for a National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), State Human Rights Commissions (SHRC), as well as Human Rights Courts.
- **Composition of NHRC:** Under the Act, the chairperson of the NHRC is a person who has been a Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The Bill amends this to provide that a person who has been Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, or a Judge of the Supreme Court will be the chairperson of the NHRC.
- The Act provides for two persons having knowledge of human rights to be appointed as members of the NHRC. The Bill amends this to allow three members to be appointed, of which at least one will be a woman. Under the Act, chairpersons of various commissions such as the National Commission for Scheduled Castes, National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, and National Commission for Women are members of the NHRC. The Bill provides for including the chairpersons of the National Commission for Backward Classes, the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights, and the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities as members of the NHRC.
- **Chairperson of SHRC:** Under the Act, the chairperson of a SHRC is a person who has been a Chief Justice of a High Court. The Bill amends this to provide that a person who has been Chief Justice or Judge of a High Court will be chairperson of a SHRC
- **Term of office:** The Act states that the chairperson and members of the NHRC and SHRC will hold office for five years or till the age of seventy years, whichever is earlier. The Bill reduces the term of office to three years or till the age of seventy years, whichever is earlier. Further, the Act allows for the reappointment of members of the NHRC and SHRCs for a period of five years. The Bill removes the five-year limit for reappointment.
- **Powers of Secretary-General:** The Act provides for a Secretary-General of the NHRC and a Secretary of a SHRC, who exercise powers as may be delegated to them. The Bill amends this and allows the Secretary-General and Secretary to exercise all administrative and financial powers (except judicial functions), subject to the respective chairperson's control.
- **Union Territories:** The Bill provides that the central government may confer on a SHRC human rights functions being discharged by Union Territories. Functions relating to human rights in the case of Delhi will be dealt with by the NHRC.

62. Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2019

- **Jal Shakti Minister Shri Gajendra Singh Shekhawat launched the Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2019 (SSG 2019)** in the Delhi.
- To be instituted from August 14 to September 30, 2019, SSG 2019 will cover 17,450 villages in 698 districts across India and include 87,250 public places namely schools, anganwadi centres, public health centres, haat/bazaars/religious places, making it India's largest rural sanitation survey.

63. Haryana Administrative Tribunal

- The Tribunal is meant to adjudicate over the service matters of the state employees that earlier would be directly heard by the High Court. It is a quasi-judicial body on the lines of Central Administrative Tribunal for redressal of the grievance of state employees concerning their employment.
- In the absence of the Tribunal, the employees have no other option but to directly approach the High Court. The government's decision to establish the Tribunal had been pending since 2015 and is aimed at reducing a large number of pending cases before the High Court and quick disposal of the grievances of employees, as per the state. Tribunal orders can be challenged before the High Court.
- The Centre has already notified the appointment of Justice (retd.) Sneh Prashar as the Chairperson of the Tribunal for the period of five years and she has been given a temporary office.
- Article 323-A, which came by way of 42nd constitutional amendment in 1976, enabled the Centre to enact The Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985 for setting-up the Tribunals for adjudication over "disputes and complaints with respect to recruitment and conditions of service of persons". The Centre under the Act can establish the Tribunal for its own employees and also has the power to establish one for a state after receiving a request from the state government.
- Two or more states can also agree for a single tribunal. The Tribunal is to be headed by a Chairman or Chairperson – a retired High Court Judge, and a number of Judicial and Administrative Members. The Chairperson can be removed only by the President of India. The Tribunal can also have benches at different locations.
- The Union Government last month also issued another notification – the one abolishing the Himachal Pradesh Administrative Tribunal which had been in existence since 2015. The request for it came from the state cabinet. Established first in 1986, the Himachal Tribunal was earlier also abolished in 2008 but re-established in 2015.
- Kerala, Karnataka, West Bengal and Maharashtra with their own tribunals for service matters. On August 2, Odisha also got abolished its Administrative Tribunal through a notification issued by the Centre.

64. Aadi Mahotsav

- Aadi Mahotsav (National Tribal Festival), a joint initiative of Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India & Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) is a 9 day event from 17th to 25th August, 2019 at Polo Ground, Leh-Ladakh.
- The theme of the festival is: "A celebration of the spirit of Tribal Craft, Culture and Commerce". TRIFED essentially is to play the role of a 'Service provider' & 'Market Developer'.
- The event will see around 160 Tribal artisans from more than 20 states across the country, actively participating and showcasing their masterpieces.
- The product range will comprise of Tribal Textiles from Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Odisha, West Bengal; Tribal Jewellery from Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and North East; Tribal Paintings like Gond art from Madhya Pradesh, Warli art from Maharashtra; Metal craft from Chhattisgarh; Black pottery from Manipur, and Naturals and Organic products from Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka.

- The event will have two reputed local cultural troupes presenting Ladakhi folk dances. The troupes will perform Jabro Dance - a nomadic dance and song of people inhabiting eastern Ladakh and Spawo dance, a heroic song and dance associated with a legendary hero of Himalayan region called K'sar.

65. One Stop Solution To Verify & Authenticate Voter Details

- On the occasion of the nationwide mega million launch of Electors Verification Programme, a special camp was held at Election Commission of India Headquarters in New Delhi on September 1, 2019 where there was unveiling of the initiative on National Voters' Service Portal (<https://www.nvsp.in/>) and Voter Helpline App.
- The main aim of the programme is to improve the health of Electoral rolls and to provide better electoral services to citizens and increase the level of Communication between voters and the Commission.
- The one time authentication of details and sharing contact detail would help electors to get update on online application status, status of EPIC, Election Day announcement, voter slip on their registered email and mobile number. Regular notification on modifications on Serial No. and details of Polling Station, Change in BLO/ ERO, all information related to Polling Station will also be shared with the Electors.

66. Declaration Of Certain Individuals As Terrorists Under The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967

- Invoking the recent amendments in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, the Central Government has decided to declare the following individuals as terrorists and add their names to Schedule 4 of the Act:
 - ✓ Maulana Masood Azhar : chief, founder and key leader of Jaish-e-Mohammad
 - ✓ Hafiz Muhammad: chief, founder and key leader of Lashkar-e-Taiba/Jamat-ud-Dawa
 - ✓ Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi: chief operation commander of Lashkar-e-Taiba and one of its founder members
 - ✓ Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar: runs an international underworld crime syndicate and is involved in perpetrating acts of terror
- All of the above are involved in terrorist attacks in India, and have been designated as global terrorists under United Nations.
- Earlier when terrorist organizations were banned, the individuals associated with it simply changed names and continued to carry out terrorist activities.

67. Rastriya Poshan Maah

- Under POSHAN Abhiyaan, this September is being celebrated as the Poshan Maah across country to address the malnutritional challenges. Rastriya Poshan Maah or National Nutrition Month is being launched across the country.

- With Women & Child Development as the nodal Department, a month-long activities focussing on antenatal care, anaemia, growth monitoring, girls' education, diet, right age of marriage, hygiene and sanitation, eat healthy as themes are being showcased in form of food melas, rallies, school level campaigns, anaemia test camps, recipe demonstration, radio & TV talk shows and seminars all across country.
- The month-long intensive event plans to bring about convergence amongst various ministries/ departments to rally people's opinion and participation to reduce and finally eliminate malnutrition from the country. Poshan Maah aims at making people aware of the importance of nutrition and giving individual access to government services to support supplement nutrition for their children and pregnant women/lactating mothers.
- This year Poshan Maah focuses on five critical components - 'First 1000 days of the Child, Anaemia, Diarrhoea, Hand Wash & Sanitation and Poshtik Aahar (wholesome meal with diet diversity)', called 'Paanch Sutras'.

68.Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Act, 2019

- Arbitration Council of India: The Bill seeks to establish an independent body called the Arbitration Council of India (ACI) for the promotion of arbitration, mediation, conciliation and other alternative dispute redressal mechanisms. Its functions include: (i) framing policies for grading arbitral institutions and accrediting arbitrators, (ii) making policies for the establishment, operation and maintenance of uniform professional standards for all alternate dispute redressal matters, and (iii) maintaining a depository of arbitral awards (judgments) made in India and abroad.
- Composition of the ACI: The ACI will consist of a Chairperson who is either: (i) a Judge of the Supreme Court; or (ii) a Judge of a High Court; or (iii) Chief Justice of a High Court; or (iv) an eminent person with expert knowledge in conduct of arbitration. Other members will include an eminent arbitration practitioner, an academician with experience in arbitration, and government appointees.
- Appointment of arbitrators: Under the 1996 Act, parties were free to appoint arbitrators. In case of disagreement on an appointment, the parties could request the Supreme Court, or the concerned High Court, or any person or institution designated by such Court, to appoint an arbitrator.
- Under the Bill, the Supreme Court and High Courts may now designate arbitral institutions, which parties can approach for the appointment of arbitrators. For international commercial arbitration, appointments will be made by the institution designated by the Supreme Court. For domestic arbitration, appointments will be made by the institution designated by the concerned High Court. In case there are no arbitral institutions available, the Chief Justice of the concerned High Court may maintain a panel of arbitrators to perform the functions of the arbitral institutions. An application for appointment of an arbitrator is required to be disposed of within 30 days.
- Relaxation of time limits: Under the Act, arbitral tribunals are required to make their award within a period of 12 months for all arbitration proceedings. The Bill seeks to remove this time restriction for international commercial arbitrations. It adds that tribunals must endeavour to dispose of international arbitration matters within 12 months.
- Completion of written submissions: Currently, there is no time limit to file written submissions before an arbitral tribunal. The Bill requires that the written claim and the defence to the claim in an arbitration proceeding, should be completed within six months of the appointment of the arbitrators.

- Confidentiality of proceedings: The Bill provides that all details of arbitration proceedings will be kept confidential except for the details of the arbitral award in certain circumstances. Disclosure of the arbitral award will only be made where it is necessary for implementing or enforcing the award.
- Applicability of Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 2015: The Bill clarifies that the 2015 Act shall only apply to arbitral proceedings which started on or after October 23, 2015.

69.The Interpol General Assembly

- India has proposed to Interpol that the General Assembly of the organization be held in New Delhi in 2022 as part of the nation's 75th Independence Day celebrations.
- The International Criminal Police Organisation, or Interpol, is a 194-member intergovernmental organisation headquartered in Lyon, France. It was formed in 1923 as the International Criminal Police Commission, and started calling itself Interpol in 1956. India joined the organisation in 1949, and is one of its oldest members.
- It enables police forces from different countries to share and access data on crimes and criminals, and offers a "range of technical and operational support". Interpol's declared global policing goals include countering terrorism, promoting border integrity worldwide, protection of vulnerable communities, providing a secure cyberspace for people and businesses, curbing illicit markets, supporting environment security, and promoting global integrity.
- The General Assembly is Interpol's supreme governing body, and comprises representatives from all its member countries. The General Assembly meets annually for a session lasting approximately four days, to vote on activities and policy. Each country is represented by one or more delegates at the Assembly, who are typically chiefs of law enforcement agencies.
- The Interpol's 88th General Assembly will assemble in Santiago, Chile, later this year. The 2018 (87th), 2017 (86th), 2016 (85th), and 2015 (84th) General Assemblies met in Dubai, UAE, Beijing, China, Bali, Indonesia, and Kigali, Rwanda, respectively.

70.Motor Vehicles Amendment Act, 2019

- The Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill, 2019 is based on the recommendations of the Group of Transport Ministers of States. The penalties in Act will be increasing by 10 per cent every year on April 1, as notified by the Central government.
- The Bill seeks to amend the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 to provide for road safety and many of its provisions came into effect since September 1, 2019. The Act provides for grant of licenses and permits related to motor vehicles, standards for motor vehicles, and penalties for violation of these provisions.
- The new Act has also extended the period for renewal of driving licences from one month to one year after the date of expiry.
- Only if the renewal delayed more than a year, will the driver have to undergo a test of competence.

- **Compensation for road accident victims:** The central government will develop a scheme for cashless treatment of road accident victims during golden hour. The Bill defines golden hour as the time period of up to one hour following a traumatic injury, during which the likelihood of preventing death through prompt medical care is the highest. The central government may also make a scheme for providing interim relief to claimants seeking compensation under third party insurance. The Bill increases the minimum compensation for hit and run cases as follows:
 - ✓ in case of death, from Rs 25,000 to two lakh rupees, and
 - ✓ in case of grievous injury, from Rs 12,500 to Rs 50,000.
- **Compulsory insurance:** The Bill requires the central government to constitute a Motor Vehicle Accident Fund, to provide compulsory insurance cover to all road users in India. It will be utilised for:
 - ✓ treatment of persons injured in road accidents as per the golden hour scheme,
 - ✓ compensation to representatives of a person who died in a hit and run accident,
 - ✓ compensation to a person grievously hurt in a hit and run accident, and
 - ✓ compensation to any other persons as prescribed by the central government.
- This Fund will be credited through:
 - ✓ payment of a nature notified by the central government,
 - ✓ a grant or loan made by the central government,
 - ✓ balance of the Solatium Fund (existing fund under the Act to provide compensation for hit and run accidents), or
 - ✓ any other source as prescribed the central government.
- **Good samaritans:** The Bill defines a good samaritan as a person who renders emergency medical or non-medical assistance to a victim at the scene of an accident. The assistance must have been
 - ✓ in good faith,
 - ✓ voluntary, and
 - ✓ without the expectation of any reward. Such a person will not be liable for any civil or criminal action for any injury to or death of an accident victim, caused due to their negligence in providing assistance to the victim.
- **Recall of vehicles:** The Bill allows the central government to order for recall of motor vehicles if a defect in the vehicle may cause damage to the environment, or the driver, or other road users. The manufacturer of the recalled vehicle will be required to:
 - ✓ reimburse the buyers for the full cost of the vehicle, or
 - ✓ replace the defective vehicle with another vehicle with similar or better specifications.
- **National Transportation Policy:** The central government may develop a National Transportation Policy, in consultation with state governments. The Policy will:
 - ✓ establish a planning framework for road transport,

✓ develop a framework for grant of permits, and

✓ specify priorities for the transport system, among other things.

- **Road Safety Board:** The Bill provides for a National Road Safety Board, to be created by the central government through a notification. The Board will advise the central and state governments on all aspects of road safety and traffic management including:

✓ standards of motor vehicles,

✓ registration and licensing of vehicles,

✓ standards for road safety, and

✓ promotion of new vehicle technology.

- **Offences and penalties:** The Bill increases penalties for several offences under the Act. For example, the maximum penalty for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs has been increased from Rs 2,000 to Rs 10,000.

✓ If a vehicle manufacturer fails to comply with motor vehicle standards, the penalty will be a fine of up to Rs 100 crore, or imprisonment of up to one year, or both.

✓ If a contractor fails to comply with road design standards, the penalty will be a fine of up to one lakh rupees.

- The central government may increase fines mentioned under the Act every year by up to 10%.

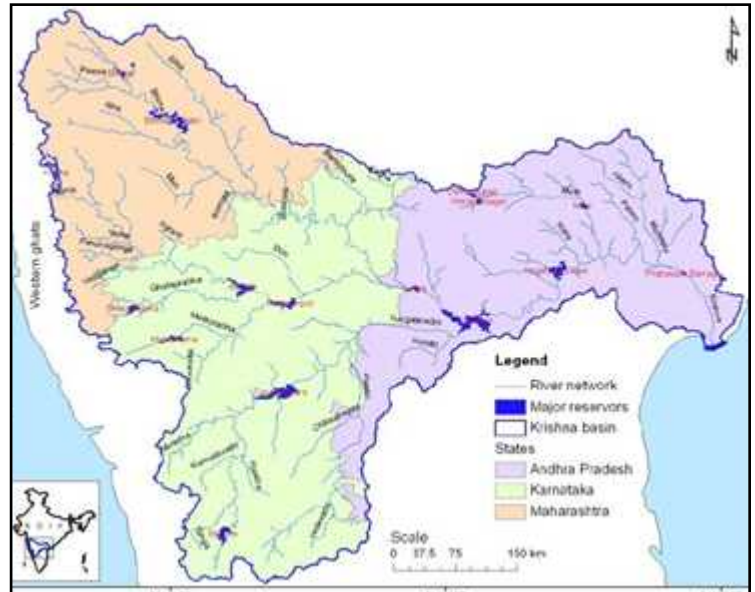
- **Provisions for imprisonment:** Besides higher penalty, the new Act also includes imprisonment for severe crimes. Speed racing can attract imprisonment for three months (with or without a fine);

✓ this will extend to a period of one year if caught for the second time.

✓ For offences by juveniles, the guardian or owner of the vehicle shall be deemed to be guilty and punished with a 25,000-fine and three years' imprisonment.

- The juvenile would be tried under Juvenile Justice Act, 2000 and the registration of motor vehicle will be cancelled for a period of 12 months. The owner of a motor vehicle who alters it by way of retrofitting of motor vehicle parts in a manner not permitted under the Act shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months (and/or with fine of 5,000 per such alteration).

- **Taxi aggregators:** The Bill defines aggregators as digital intermediaries or market places which can be used by passengers to connect with a driver for transportation purposes (taxi services). These aggregators will be issued licenses by state Further, they must comply with the Information Technology Act, 2000.



- In 2017, as per data by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, there had occurred 4.64 lakh accidents that claimed lives of 1.47 lakh people. Two-wheelers accounted for over a third of all road accidents. Slowly, as all States begin implementing the provisions of the Act with heftier fines and imprisonment for drunken driving, driving without licence and insurance and juvenile offences, people may start to follow rules and road accidents may actually reduce.
- In the last one week itself, there has been a rush among motorists to renew their lapsed insurance policies, according to data from the largest online insurance aggregator. A valid motor insurance is important so that the aggrieved parties in a road accident get compensation. However, note that given that it is only a model Act, State governments are free to make their own laws and rules. Success depends on how far states enforce the provisions of the Act.

71. Krishna Water Dispute

- A dispute over the sharing of Krishna waters has been ongoing for many decades, beginning with the erstwhile Hyderabad and Mysore states, and later continuing between successors Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. In 1969, the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal (KWDT) was set up under the Inter-State River Water Dispute Act, 1956 as provided for under Article 262 of the Indian Constitution, and presented its report in 1973.
- The report, which was published in 1976, divided the 2060 TMC (thousand million cubic feet) of Krishna water at 75 per cent dependability into three parts: 560 TMC for Maharashtra, 700 TMC for Karnataka and 800 TMC for Andhra Pradesh. At the same time, it was stipulated that the KWDT order may be reviewed or revised by a competent authority or tribunal any time after May 31, 2000.
- Afterward, as new grievances arose between the states, the second KWDT was instituted in 2004. It delivered its report in 2010, which made allocations of the Krishna water at 65 per cent dependability and for surplus flows as follows: 81 TMC for Maharashtra, 177 TMC for Karnataka, and 190 TMC for Andhra Pradesh.
- Soon after the 2010 report was presented, Andhra Pradesh challenged it through a Special Leave Petition before the Supreme Court in 2011. In an order in the same year, the apex court stopped the Centre from publishing it in the official Gazette.
- In 2013, the KWDT issued a 'further report', which was again challenged by Andhra Pradesh in the Supreme Court in 2014. After the creation of Telangana from Andhra Pradesh in 2014, the Water Resources Ministry has been extending the duration of the KWDT. Andhra Pradesh has since asked that Telangana be included as a separate party at the KWDT and that the allocation of Krishna waters be reworked among four states, instead of three. Maharashtra and Karnataka are now resisting this move.

72. Kisan Maan Dhan Yojana

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi shall launch the Kisan Maan Dhan Yojana on the 12th of September, 2019. The Scheme shall secure the lives of 5 Crore Small and Marginal Farmers by providing a minimum pension of Rs 3000 per month, to those who attain 60 years of age.
- The scheme has an outlay of Rs 10,774 Crores for the next three years. All the small and marginal farmers who are currently between the ages of 18 to 40 years can apply for the scheme. Farmer's monthly contribution can be made from the instalments of PM-KISAN or through CSCs.

73. Indian Skill Development Services

- The fresh batch of the newest central government services, the Indian Skill Development Services commenced their training program at the Administrative Training Institute (ATI), Mysuru on Monday. This service has been specially created for the Training Directorate of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and is a Group 'A' service. These are the first batch which is joining the ISDS cadre from the Indian Engineering Service Examination conducted by UPSC.
- The induction of young talent as ISDS officers is one of the special initiatives taken by the MSDE and the government as a whole, to significantly strengthen the skill development eco-system in the country. This is the first batch of young minds from Indian Engineering Services to be included in MSDE. The aim for this is to attract young and talented administrators towards institutionalizing the Skill Development environment in the country.

74. Jal Jeevan Mission

- The ambitious Jal Jeevan Mission aimed at providing potable water by providing piped water to all households by 2024. The Jal Shakti Ministry, formed by integrating the Water Resources and Drinking Water and Sanitation Ministries, aims to work with state governments to ensure 'Har Ghar Jal' to all rural households by 2024.
- Under the Jal Jeevan Mission, the government will focus on rainwater harvesting and water conservation in 256 districts in the first phase and carry out other initiatives, including renovation of traditional water bodies and tanks, reuse of water and recharge structures, watershed development and intensive afforestation.
- This assumes importance given that water crisis has presented itself as a clear and present danger to India. Policy think-tank Niti Aayog said in CWMI report that nearly 600 million Indians already face "high to extreme water stress." It said 21 cities, including Delhi, Bengaluru, Chennai and Hyderabad, will run out of groundwater by 2020, affecting 100 million people. Matters are only likely to worsen with the country's water demand likely to double by 2030, indicating there will be a 6% loss in gross domestic product by 2050.

75. Screening children for Leprosy and Tuberculosis

- India has embarked on a large-scale plan to screen all children for leprosy and tuberculosis. An estimated 25 crore children below the age of 18 will be screened for the two infectious diseases, and if a person is suspected to have either of the two, s/he will be sent to a higher centre for confirmation. The existing Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram (RBSK) infrastructure will be used for the screening.
- India eliminated leprosy in 2005 – WHO defines elimination as an incidence rate of less than one case per 10,000 populations. All states except Chhattisgarh and the Union Territory of Dadra and Nagar Haveli have eliminated leprosy. However, 1.15 lakh to 1.2 lakh new leprosy cases are still detected every year, Health Ministry officials said. TB kills an estimated 4,80,000 Indians every year – an average over 1,300 every day. India also has more than a million "missing" cases every year that are not notified.

- Launched in 2013 under the National Health Mission, RBSK is focused on preventing disease and disability in children. “Child Health Screening and Early Intervention Services” basically refer to early detection and management of a set of 30 health conditions prevalent in children less than 18 years of age. These conditions are broadly defects at birth, diseases in children, deficiency conditions and developmental delays including disabilities, together described as 4Ds. Until now, neither leprosy nor TB were parts of the programme.
- In 2017, India had set a target of elimination of leprosy by 2018, going by the Budget speech that year. The deadline has passed but leprosy remains a challenge in a country that launched the National Leprosy Eradication Programme way back in 1955. For tuberculosis, the global Sustainable Development Goal target is to end the disease is 2030. However, there is a new urgency in India’s TB control efforts since last year, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi suo motu advanced the deadline for India to end TB to 2025.

76. National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP)

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September 2019 launched the National Animal Disease Control Programme (NADCP), aimed at eradicating foot and mouth disease (FMD) and brucellosis in livestock. India has the world’s largest livestock population of 125-crore plus heads, but cattle productivity is low, and animal diseases are a major concern.
- NADCP aims to vaccinate over 500 million livestock heads, including cattle, buffalo, sheep, goats and pigs, against FMD, and some 36 million female bovine calves annually against brucellosis. The programme has received 100% funding from the Centre, amounting to Rs 12,652 crore for five years until 2024, the release said. The NADCP aims to control these two diseases by 2025, and to eradicate them by 2030.
- Foot and Mouth Disease is a highly infectious viral disease of cattle, swine, sheep, goats, and other cloven-hooved ruminants. FMD is generally not fatal in adult animals but leaves them severely weakened, and results in a drastically reduced production of milk and can, therefore, be financially ruinous for dairy farmers. Infected animals get a fever, sores in their mouth, on their teats, and between their hooves. FMD spreads through excretions and secretions; infected animals also exhale the virus.
- Brucellosis is a zoonotic disease that, according to the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying, is endemic in most parts of the country. Brucellosis causes early abortions in animals, and prevents the addition of new calves to the animal population. The Brucellosis Control Programme component of the NADCP envisages 100% vaccination coverage of female cattle and buffalo calves (4-8 months of age) once in their lifetimes.

77. Guidelines for drones in India

- The **general guidelines issued by the civil aviation regulator, Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA)**, also lay down specific no-go areas for drones. These guidelines, issued last year, classified civilian remotely piloted aircraft systems into specific types, and made it legal for ordinary enthusiasts to operate drones in India, subject to various requirements and clearances. The guidelines came into effect on December 1, 2018.

- **DGCA has identified multiple categories of drones, which can be broadly classified as 'Nano' (weighing up to 250 g), 'Micro' (more than 250 g but less than 2 kg) and 'Small and above' (weighing 2 kg or more). Every drone that is bigger than a 'Nano' must obtain a unique identification number (UIN) from the aviation regulator (similar to the registration number for a car). This number must be displayed on the remotely piloted aircraft.**
- A UIN will be issued once, against a fee of Rs 1,000, and will not be issued to a foreign citizen or entity. It was not immediately clear how big the two Americans' drone was, and whether it was illegal on account of not having a UIN. Users of bigger drones will be required to obtain a Unique Air Operator's Permit (UAOP), similar to a driver's licence. The permit will cost Rs 25,000 and will be valid for five years. Renewals will cost Rs 10,000.
- **The UIN and UAOP can be obtained from the online platform Digital Sky.** The permits will be issued in less than a week, DGCA officials had said at the time the drone policy was notified. All drones other than those in the 'Nano' category must meet mandatory equipment requirements such as GPS, anti-collision light, ID plate, radio-frequency identification (RFID) and SIM facilities with software that ensures 'no-permission, no-takeoff', among other features.
- Before flying a 'Small' or bigger drone, an operator has to file a flight plan, and inform the local police, so that the machine can reach a height of 400 ft or more, and use both controlled and uncontrolled airspace. 'Micro' drones will be required to submit a flight plan only if using controlled airspace; the operator must, however, inform the local police in all cases. Many drones used for amateur photography fall in this category. These aircraft will need a UIN but no UAOP, and will be allowed to climb only to a height of 200 ft.
- 'Nano' drones will be able to operate freely, without any registration or permit, but their operations will be restricted to 50 ft above the ground, and to uncontrolled airspaces and enclosed premises. All categories of drones must be flown in the visual line of sight, and only during daytime. The regulator listed 12 categories of "no-drone zones". These include the area up to 5 km from the perimeters of the high-traffic airports of Mumbai, Delhi, Chennai, Kolkata, Bengaluru and Hyderabad. For other airports, the no-drone zone extends up to 3 km.
- **Drones cannot fly closer than 25 km of international borders, including the Line of Control and Line of Actual Control. The area within a 5-km radius of New Delhi's Vijay Chowk is a no-drone zone;** this, however, is subject to any additional conditions/restrictions that local law enforcement agencies/authorities may impose for security reasons. A drone can't be flown within 2 km from the perimeter of strategic locations and vital installations notified by the Ministry of Home Affairs, unless cleared by the Ministry; within a 3 km radius of secretariat complexes in state capitals; and from a mobile platform such as a moving vehicle, ship or aircraft.

78. Jammu and Kashmir's Public Safety Act

- **The Jammu & Kashmir Public Safety Act, 1978 is a preventive detention law,** under which a person is taken into custody to prevent him or her from acting in any manner that is prejudicial to "the security of the state or the maintenance of the public order". It is very similar to the National Security Act that is used by other state governments for preventive detention.
- It comes into force by an administrative order passed either by Divisional Commissioner or the District Magistrate, and not by an detention order by police based on specific allegations or for

specific violation of laws. A person who is detained under the PSA need not be produced before a magistrate within 24 hours of the detention. The detained person does not have the right to move a bail application before a criminal court, and cannot engage any lawyer to represent him or her before the detaining authority. Detention can be up to two years.

- The only way this administrative preventive detention order can be challenged is through a habeas corpus petition filed by relatives of the detained person. The High Court and the Supreme Court have the jurisdiction to hear such petitions and pass a final order seeking quashing of the PSA. However, if the order is quashed, there is no bar on the government passing another detention order under the PSA and detaining the person again.
- The District Magistrate who has passed the detention order has protection under the Act, which states that the order is considered “done in good faith”. Therefore, there can be no prosecution or any legal proceeding against the official who has passed the order. Also, after an amendment last year by the Governor, persons detained under the PSA in Jammu & Kashmir can now be detained in jails outside the state.

79. Bamboonomics

- **Union Minister for Tribal Affairs Shri Arjun Munda launched the Biggest Tribal movement to promote tribal enterprise through Bamboonomics** in the country which will be a beacon for the rest of the world. He launched the movement for combating desertification and the climate change at “The Indian Perspective through Bamboonomics” session at ‘COP 14 UNCCD: TRIFED-GIZ’ organized at Greater Noida Expo.
- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has set the goal of additional 5 mha. under the Bonn Challenge (The Bonn Challenge is a global effort to bring 150 million hectares of the world’s deforested and degraded land into restoration by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030) and Ministry of Tribal Affairs and TRIFED would strive to support this national commitment.
- TRIFED introduced the “**The 4P1000 Initiative: The Tribal Perspective through Bamboonomics**” in the side event and explained the genesis of the revolution during the global meet (COP 14 of UNCCD) in New Delhi on the 13th September’19. The 4P1000 Initiative: The international initiative “4per1000”, launched by France on 1 December 2015 at the COP 21, consists of federating all voluntary stakeholders of the public and private sectors.
- TRIFED will involve the tribal community of India for rehabilitating the degraded land without compromising the income of the poor in the garb of environmentally friendly development. Bamboonomics has been designed in such a way that while doing the environmental services, the tribals will be earning. TRIFED is striving to integrate its **Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojna (PMVDY)** with this new global environmental intervention termed as TICD (TRIFED’s Initiative to Combat Desertification).

80. LEAP and ARPIT

- Union Human Resource Development Minister Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal ‘Nishank’ launched Leadership for Academicians Programme (LEAP) - 2019 and Annual Refresher Programme in Teaching (ARPIT) – 2019 under **Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers and Teaching (PMMNMTT)**.

- To build higher managerial capabilities of existing higher education leaders and administrators and to draw fresh talent into the management of higher education systems, a National Initiative “Leadership for Academicians Programme (LEAP)” was launched to design and deliver a structured scheme of leadership development for HEIs. LEAP is a three weeks leadership development training programme (2 weeks domestic and one week foreign training) for second level academic functionaries in public funded higher education institutions.
- Ministry of Human Resource Development launched **Annual Refresher Programme in Teaching (ARPIT)** in November, 2018. ARPIT is a major and unique initiative of online professional development of 1.5 million higher education faculty using the MOOCs platform SWAYAM. For implementing ARPIT, discipline-specific National Resource Centers (NRCs) are identified which are tasked to prepare online training material with focus on latest developments in the discipline, new & emerging trends, pedagogical improvements and methodologies for transacting revised curriculum.

81. Multipurpose National Identity Card (MPNIC)

- Speaking on the occasion of laying the foundation for a new office building for the Registrar General of India and Census Commissioner in New Delhi, Home Minister Amit Shah spoke about the potential of using the upcoming 2021 Census data for future planning, development initiatives and welfare schemes.
- The Home Minister clarified that although there was no such scheme in the offing, it was possible to get rid of excess processes and cards such as the Aadhaar card, the voter card, the identity card etc. He further argued that if this Census was done properly and in the right format, it was possible that there could be just one single card in which all the other cards could reside. In other words, a single card that has your bank card, voter id card, Aadhaar card, and passport.
- The **Multipurpose National Identity Card (MPNIC)** was first suggested by a 2001 report on **Reforming the National Security System** by an empowered Group of Ministers during the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government in relation to the growing threat from illegal migration. The eGOM report itself was a response to the K Subrahmanyam-led Kargil Review Committee, which was instituted in the wake of the Kargil conflict of 1999.
- However technology has taken a giant leap since the MPNIC was first proposed in 2001. A good example of that is the existence of the Aadhaar database, which now has almost all residents of India on it.
- Lastly, according to media reports, the government is expected to launch the National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID) by the start of 2020. The Natgrid would reportedly be used by 10 agencies such as Intelligence Bureau (IB), Research & Analysis Wing (R&AW), Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), and Enforcement Directorate (ED) among others, to scour data real-time from 21 databases such as airline travel, credit card transactions etc with the aim to track and prevent terror and illegal immigration activities.

82. Satluj Yamuna Link Canal Issue

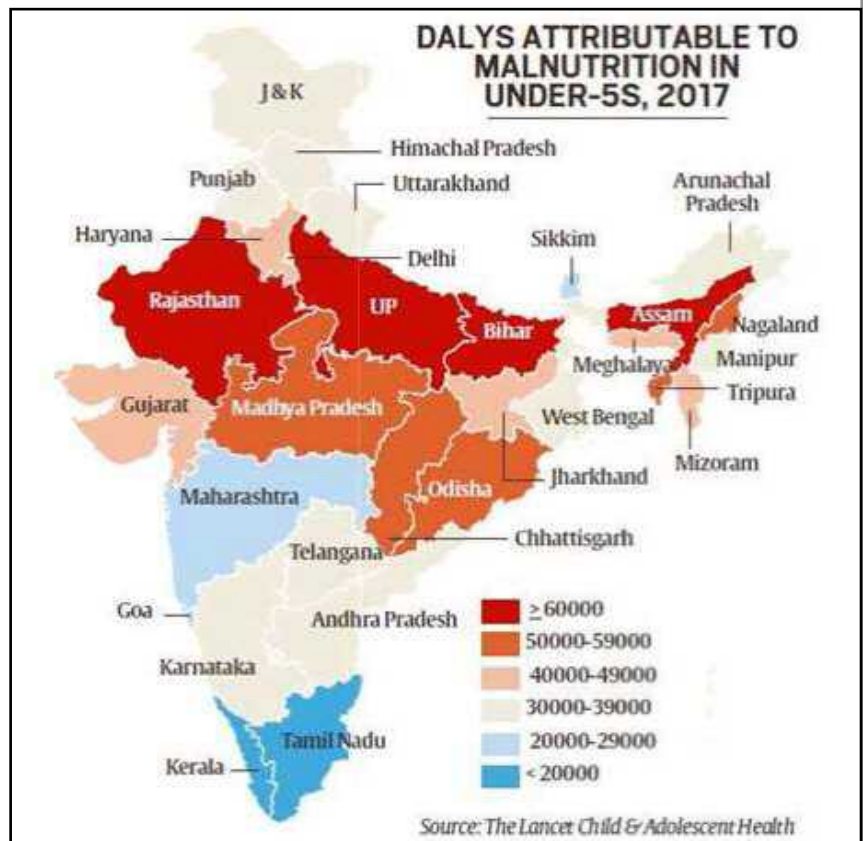
- The issue dates back to 1966 at the time of reorganisation of Punjab. When Haryana was formed, a need arose to share river waters with the newly formed state. But Punjab was opposed to sharing waters of Ravi and Beas rivers with Haryana citing riparian principle. On April 8, 1982, the then Prime

Minister Indira Gandhi launched the construction of Satluj-Yamuna Link canal, by organising a groundbreaking ceremony in Kapoori village in Patiala district.

- A stretch of 214 km SYL was to be constructed out of which 122 km was to cross Punjab and the rest 92 km in Haryana. But Akalis launched an agitation in the form of Kapoori Morcha against the construction of the canal. Then in July 1985, then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and the then Akali Dal chief Sant Harchand Singh Longowal signed an accord agreeing for a new tribunal to assess the water.
- The Eradi Tribunal headed by Supreme Court Judge V Balakrishna Eradi was set up to reassess availability and sharing of water. The Tribunal, in 1987, recommended an increase in the shares of Punjab and Haryana to 5 MAF and 3.83 MAF, respectively.
- As per government's study, Punjab's many areas may go dry after 2029. The state has already over-exploited its groundwater for irrigation purposes as it fills granaries of centre by growing wheat and paddy worth Rs 70,000 crore every year. As per the reports, water in about 79 per cent area of the state is over-exploited. Out of 138 blocks, 109 blocks are —over-exploited||, two blocks are —critical|| five blocks are —semi-critical|| and only 22 blocks are in —safe|| category. In such a situation when farmers are committing suicides and alarm button has been pressed for saving water, the government says, sharing it with any other state is impossible.
- Haryana has been staking claim on Ravi-Beas waters through SYL canal on the plea that providing water for irrigation was a tough task for the state. In southern parts, where the underground water had depleted up to 1700 feet, there was a problem of drinking water. The Supreme Court recently ordered asking Punjab, Haryana and Centre to sort out SYL issue amicably

83. Malnutrition and Diseases in under-5 children

- A report published Wednesday in The Lancet Child & Adolescent Health gives comprehensive estimates of disease burden due to child and maternal malnutrition and the trends of its indicators in every state of India from 1990 to 2017. Key findings include:
- The death rate attributable to malnutrition in under-5 children in India has dropped by two-thirds from 1990 to 2017. Malnutrition is, however, still the underlying risk factor for 68% of the deaths in under five children in India.
- The Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALY) rate attributable to malnutrition in children varies 7-fold among the states — a gap between a high of 74,782 in Uttar Pradesh and a low of 11,002 in Kerala. Other states with a high



burden are

- Bihar, Assam and Rajasthan. Followed by Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Nagaland and Tripura.
- The proportion of under-5 deaths attributable to malnutrition, which is 68.2% across India, ranges between a high of 72.7% in Bihar and a low of 50.8% in Kerala. Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Uttar Pradesh are states with a high such proportion, while Meghalaya, Tamil Nadu, Mizoram and Goa have the lowest proportions of such deaths. Among the malnutrition indicators, low birth weight is the largest contributor to child deaths in India, followed by child growth failure which includes stunting, underweight, and wasting.

84.All India Survey on Higher Education

- **The Union Ministry for Human Resource Development has released AISHE (2018-19).** The MHRD collects online information on Universities, Colleges and other Higher Educational Institutions under the All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE), with its first publication in 2011.
- As per the report, UP and Karnataka have more female enrolment in higher education. Also, the ratio of male students is higher than females on every level except certificate, Post Graduate and M.Phil. The higher rate of male enrolment than female enrolment is witnessed at all levels in many states.

Important highlights include:

- UP have 49.30% male and 50% females as per the survey. In Karnataka, female enrolment is 50.04%.
- Maharashtra has recorded the second-highest student enrolment with roughly 54.95% male and 45.05% females.
- Tamil Nadu has 50.87% males and 49.13% females whereas West Bengal has 50.37% males and 49.63% females.
- In Rajasthan, male enrollment number is higher as compared to the females.
- UG level student enrolment is 51% males and 49% females across India.
- For diploma, it is 66.8% of males and 33.2% of females.
- PhD has 56.18% males and 43.82% females.
- For integrated levels, it is 57.50% for males and 42.50% for females.
- For PG Diploma students, enrolment is 54.09% for male students and 45.91% for female students.
- The top 6 States having highest student enrollment are UP, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Karnataka and West Bengal. However, when it comes to the total number of institutes, the state-wise ranking is different with UP (8077) at the top followed by Maharashtra (6662), Karnataka (5028), Rajasthan (3723), Andhra Pradesh (3540) and Tamil Nadu (3443).
- The above mentioned 6 states with the highest student enrolment have roughly 54.23% of the total student enrolment in India.
- Remaining 30 States (including UTs) have only 25.76% of the total student enrolment.

- The survey covers all institutes of higher education in India, and the institutes are categorised in 3 broad categories such as College, University and Stand-alone institutes (offering Paramedical, Diploma, Hotel Management and Catering courses).
- There are a total of 993 Universities, 39931 Colleges and 10725 Stand Alone Institutions listed on the AISHE web portal and out of that, 962 Universities, 38179 Colleges and 9190 Stand Alone Institutions have responded during the survey. 298 Universities are affiliating.
- More male teachers in Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) in India than females, with the lowest gender proportion in Bihar.
- 4, 16,299 are the total number of teachers out of which about 57.8 per cent are male teachers and 42.2 per cent are female teachers. In Bihar, 78.97 per cent are male teachers and 21.03 per cent are females.
- Jharkhand has 69.8 per cent male teachers and 30.2 per cent female teachers.
- UP has 32.3 per cent, female teachers.
- At All India level, there are just 73 female teachers per 100 male teachers

85.National Educational Alliance for Technology

- Ministry of Human Resource Development has announced a **new PPP Scheme, National Educational Alliance for Technology (NEAT)** for using technology for better learning outcomes in Higher Education.
- The objective is to use Artificial Intelligence to make learning more personalised and customised as per the requirements of the learner. This requires development of technologies in Adaptive Learning to address the diversity of learners.
- MHRD would act as a facilitator to ensure that the solutions are freely available to a large number of economically backward students. MHRD would create and maintain a National NEAT platform that would provide one-stop access to these technological solutions.
- EdTech companies would be responsible for developing solutions and manage registration of learners through the NEAT portal. They would be free to charge fees as per their policy. As their contribution towards the National cause, they would have to offer free coupons to the extent of 25% of the total registrations for their solution through NEAT portal.
- MHRD would distribute the free coupons for learning to the most socially/economically backward students.
- **AICTE would be the implementing agency for NEAT programme.** The scheme shall be administered under the guidance of an Apex Committee constituted by MHRD. Independent Expert Committees would be constituted for evaluating and selecting the EdTech solutions.

86.Uniform Civil Code

- A Uniform Civil Code is one that would provide for one law for the entire country, applicable to all religious communities in their personal matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption etc.

Article 44 of the Constitution lies down that the state shall Endeavour to secure a Uniform Civil Code for the citizens throughout the territory of India.

- Article 44 is one of the directive principles. These, as defined in Article 37, are not justifiable (not enforceable by any court) but the principles laid down therein are fundamental in governance.

87. Fundamental rights are enforceable in a court of law

- The Supreme Court held in *Minerva Mills (1980)*: —Indian Constitution is founded on the bed-rock of the balance between Parts III (Fundamental Rights) and IV (Directive Principles). To give absolute primacy to one over the other is to disturb the harmony of the Constitution.
- Article 31C inserted by the 42nd Amendment in 1976, however, lays down that if a law is made to implement any directive principle, it cannot be challenged on the ground of being violative of the fundamental rights under Articles 14 and 19.
- Article 25 lays down an individual's fundamental right to religion; Article 26(b) upholds the right of each religious denomination or any section thereof to —manage its own affairs in matters of religion||; Article 29 defines the right to conserve distinctive culture. An individual's freedom of religion under Article 25 is subject to —public order, health, morality|| and other provisions relating to fundamental rights, but a group's freedom under Article 26 has not been subjected to other fundamental rights.

88. 6th India Water Week-2019

- The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, inaugurated the 6th India Water Week-2019 on September 24, 2019 at Vigyan Bhavan, New Delhi. The theme of the India Water Week-2019 is '**Water Cooperation – Coping with 21st Century Challenges**' and it is being organised by the Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- Conceptualized and organized for the first time in 2012, the India Water Week is a regular forum where the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation, Government of India discusses, talks, strategizes with eminent stakeholders through seminars, exhibitions and sessions to build public awareness, to get support to implement key strategies for conservation, preservation and optimum use of available water.

89. ERSS, E-Beat Book and E-Saathi App

- Union Minister for Home Affairs, Shri Amit Shah launched **three citizen centric services** of the Chandigarh Police on 20th September including the Emergency Response Support System (ERSS - Dial 112), E-Beat Book' System and the E-Saathi App'.
- **ERSS is one of the key projects of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs under Nirbhaya Fund.** It has been designed to play a pivotal role in mitigation or preventing escalation of crime, especially against women and children. ERSS provides a single emergency number (112), computer aided dispatch of field resources to the location of distress. Citizens can send their emergency information through call, sms, and email and through the 112 India mobile app.

- The **E-Beat Book** is a web and mobile based application which will ease the collection, updating and analysis of the information related to crime and criminals in a real time. The E-Beat Book would be linked with **Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS)**, which would help in a real time updation of crime/criminal data.
- The **E-Saathi App** would help the general public, including senior citizens, to remain in touch with the police and also give suggestions to facilitate participative community policing (Your Police at Your Doorstep' initiative). The beat officer would be able to provide services like passport verification, tenant verification, servant verification, character certification etc. at a click of a button through the app, without the people needing to visit the police station. With this initiative, on one hand, where the beat officer would become more efficient in his/her working, this would make police-people communication a two-way process, on the other.

90. Astra Missile

- **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully flight tested the Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM) 'Astra'** from Su-30 MKI platform off the coast of Chandipur, Odisha. The trials were held from 16th to 19th September 2019. The trials were conducted by Indian Air Force (IAF) against Jet Banshee target aircraft simulating all possible threat scenarios.
- Astra BVRAAM has range of more than **100 kms with modern guidance and navigation techniques**. The missile has midcourse guidance and RF seeker based terminal guidance to achieve target destruction with pin point accuracy. It is the first air-to-air missile developed by India. It features mid-course inertial guidance with terminal active radar homing. Astra is designed to be capable of engaging targets at varying range and altitudes allowing for engagement of both short-range targets at a distance of 20 km (12 mi) and long-range targets up to a distance of 80 km (50 mi).
- The effort for building a state-of-the-art BVRAAM by DRDO, together with IAF has completed the user trial phase of the weapon system successfully. Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has played a role in modifying the aircraft for weapon integration. More than 50 public and private industries have contributed in building the Astra weapon system.

91. Sardar Patel National Unity Award

- Government of India has instituted the highest civilian award in the field of contribution to the unity and integrity of India, in the name of Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel.
- The Award seeks to recognize notable and inspiring contributions to promote the cause of national **unity and integrity and to reinforce the value of a strong and united India**. The award will be announced on the occasion of the National Unity Day, i.e. the birth anniversary of Sardar Patel on 31st October.
- The Award shall be conferred by the President under his hand and seal and presented by him in a presentation ceremony along with the Padma award presentation ceremony held in Rashtrapati Bhawan.
- An Award Committee would be constituted by the Prime Minister, which would include the Cabinet Secretary, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, Secretary to the President, Home Secretary as Members and three-four eminent persons selected by the Prime Minister.

- The Award would consist of a medal and a citation. No monetary grant or cash award would be attached to this Award. Not more than three Awards would be given in a year. It would not be conferred posthumously except in very rare and highly deserving cases. The Nominations would be invited every year. The applications would need to be filed online on the website specifically designed by Ministry of Home Affairs. All citizens, without distinction of religion, race caste, gender, place of birth, age or occupation, and any institution/organization would be eligible for the Award.
- Any Indian national or institution or organization based in India would be able to nominate an individual for consideration for this Award. Individuals may also nominate themselves. State Governments, UT Administrations and Ministries of Government of India may also send nominations.

92. Voluntary Code of Ethics

- Internet & Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) on behalf of its members has agreed to observe the **“Voluntary Code of Ethics”** during all future elections including the ongoing General Elections to the Haryana & Maharashtra legislative assemblies and various bye elections being held simultaneously.
- IMAI and social media platforms Facebook, Whatsapp, Twitter, Google, Sharechat and TikTok had presented and observed this “Voluntary Code of Ethics” during the General Election to 17th Lok Sabha 2019. IMAI has assured the Commission that the platforms will cooperate in ensuring the conduct of free and fair elections.
- The highlighted features of “Voluntary Code of Ethics” are as follows:
 - ✓ Social Media platforms will voluntarily undertake information, education and communication campaigns to build awareness including electoral laws and other related instructions.
 - ✓ Social Media platforms have created a high priority dedicated grievance redressal channel for taking expeditious action on the cases reported by the ECI.
 - ✓ Social Media Platforms and ECI have developed a notification mechanism by this ECI can notify the relevant platforms of potential violations of Section 126 of the R.P. Act, 1951 and other electoral laws.
 - ✓ Platforms will ensure that all political advertisements on their platforms are pre-certified from the Media Certification and Monitoring Committees as per the directions of Supreme Court.
 - ✓ Participating platforms are committed to facilitate transparency in paid political advertisements, including utilising their pre-existing labels/disclosure technology for such advertisements.

93.10 Year Rural Sanitation Strategy (2019-2029)

- The Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation (DDWS), Ministry of Jal Shakti, GoI launched the 10 Year Rural Sanitation Strategy (2019-2029), which focus on sustaining the sanitation behavior change that has been achieved under the Swachh Bharat Mission Grameen (SBM-G), ensuring that no one is left behind, and increasing access to solid and liquid waste management.

94.Aadi Mahotsav

- The Aadi Mahotsav is an effort to take tribal commerce to the next level of digital and electronic transactions. Aadi Mahotsav (Tribal Festival) is organized by Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED), Ministry of Tribal Affairs.

95.First School Education Quality Index (SEQI)

- **School Education Quality Index (SEQI) was developed by NITI Aayog** to evaluate the performance of States and Union Territories (UTs) in the school education sector.
- The index aims to bring an 'outcomes' focus to education policy by providing States and UTs with a platform to identify their strengths and weaknesses and undertake requisite course corrections or policy interventions.
- Developed through a collaborative process, including key stakeholders such as Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD), the World Bank and sector experts, the index consists of 30 critical indicators that assess the delivery of quality education. These indicators are categorized as below:
 - ✓ Category 1: Outcomes
 - ❖ Domain 1: Learning outcomes
 - ❖ Domain 2: Access outcomes
 - ❖ Domain 3: Infrastructure and facilities for outcomes
 - ❖ Domain 4: Equity outcomes
 - ✓ Category 2: Governance processes aiding outcomes
 - ❖ To ensure the system is geared towards learning, SEQI assigns almost half its weight to learning outcomes. To facilitate a like-for-like comparison, States and UTs have been grouped as Large States, Small States and UTs. States and UTs are ranked on their overall performance in the reference year 2016-17, as well as on their annual incremental performance (difference in the overall performance) between the reference year and base year (2015-16).
 - ❖ States' and UTs' performance on Learning Outcomes is driven by their results on the National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2017. Their performance on Access Outcomes is primarily driven by enrolment ratios at the secondary level and transition rates from upper-primary to secondary level. In terms of
 - ❖ Infrastructure & Facilities for Outcomes, States' and UTs' performance is strongly linked to the presence of Computer Aided-Learning (CAL) at the elementary level and vocational education at the secondary and senior-secondary level.

96.Praytna Parv by Ministry of Tourism

- **Paryatan Parv 2019 is dedicated to 150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi.** Paryatan Parv is being organized with the objective of drawing focus on the benefits of tourism, showcasing the cultural diversity of the country and reinforcing the principle of "Tourism for All".

- The three components of Paryatan Parv, are:
 - ✓ **Dekho Apna Desh:** To encourage Indians to visit their own country. In the run up to the parv, several activities have been organised across the Country like Photography contest covering tourism attractions and experiences, promotion on Social Media; Tourism related Quiz, Essay, Debate and Painting Competitions for Students. General public engagement for the event will be promoted through the MyGov platform.
 - ✓ **Tourism for All:** Tourism Events at sites across all States in the country are being organised. The activities at these sites will include illumination in and around the Sites, Cultural Programmes of Dance, Music, Theatre, Story Telling, Sensitisation Programmes for Stakeholders around the Sites, Tourism Exhibitions, Showcasing Culture, Cuisine and Handicrafts / Handlooms, Guided Heritage Walks, etc.
 - ✓ **Tourism & Governance:** Interactive Sessions & Workshops with Stakeholders on varied themes have been organised across the Country as a part of the Paryatan parv activities.

97. The Gandhian Challenge

- On the 150th birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, AIM, NITI Aayog's Atal Tinkering Labs (ATL) and UNICEF India, including Generation Unlimited, have launched 'The Gandhian Challenge'. This innovation challenge provides a platform for every child across India to ideate innovative solutions for a sustainable India of their dreams, using Gandhi's principles.

The problem statement for the Gandhian Challenge is:

- "Share your innovative solutions/ideas to create a futuristic and sustainable world of your dreams, following Gandhi's principles."
- Ideas and solutions to the Gandhian Challenge may be expressed through broad categories: Art & Innovation (Letters, poems, painting, videos and photos, among others) and Science, Technology & Innovation (Robotics, IoT, sensors and 3D printers, among others).
- In ATLs, students of class 6th to 12th acquire a problem-solving attitude, develop innovative solutions leveraging technologies like 3D printers, robotics, miniaturised electronics, IOT and programming and DIY kits, with support from teachers and mentors.
- Review of SC/ST Judgment:
 - ✓ On 2nd October, the Supreme Court recalled its directions in a March 20, 2018 verdict that had effectively diluted provisions of arrest under the Scheduled Castes & Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989. This was following a plea by the Centre seeking a review of that judgment.
 - ✓ Generally, a review is heard in the judge's chamber, but may be heard in open court in important cases — as in the Sabarimala and Rafale cases, in which no order has been pronounced yet. In the SC/ST case, a Bench of Justice Adarsh Goel and Justice U U Lalit had admitted a review of the March 20, 2018 judgment in Subhash Kashinath Mahajan vs State of Maharashtra.

98. Developing Asia and Urbanisation

- The economic outlook update released by the Asian Development Bank last week highlighted that the number of urban inhabitants in 'Developing Asia' has increased "almost five-fold since 1970". The report, tracking World Urbanisation Prospects data, also states that the two-thirds of the nearly 1.5 billion additional city dwellers in the region belonged from India and China.
- **'Developing Asia' refers to a group of 45 countries that are members of the ADB.** As such, between 1970 to 2017, the urban population in this bunch of countries grew from 375 million to 1.84 billion. The region led the global increase in the urban population in this period and accounted for 53 per cent of it. Developing Asia urbanised faster than the rest of the world not only in terms of absolute growth, but also in terms of growth rate.

99. Divisions of Supreme Court

- Vice-President M Venkaiah Naidu has suggested that the Supreme Court institute four regional Benches to tackle the enormous backlog of cases, and to ensure their speedy disposal. Naidu also endorsed the recommendation of the Law Commission of India that the top court should be split into two divisions.
- In the early decades of the Republic, the Supreme Court of India, too, functioned largely as a constitutional court, with some 70-80 judgments being delivered every year by Constitution Benches of five or more judges who ruled, as per Article 145(3) of the Constitution, on matters "involving a substantial question of law as to the interpretation of [the] Constitution".
- Due to their heavy workload, judges mostly sit in two- or three-judge Benches to dispose of all kinds of cases; these include several non-Constitutional and relatively petty matters such as bans (or lifting of bans) on films, or allegations that a Commissioner of Police is misusing his powers.
- It has been pointed out that Article 39A says that "the state shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice, on a basis of equal opportunity, and shall... ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities".
- Article 130 says that "the Supreme Court shall sit in Delhi or in such other place or places, as the Chief Justice of India may, with the approval of the President, from time to time, appoint." Supreme Court Rules give the Chief Justice of India the power to constitute Benches — he can, for instance, have a
- Constitution Bench of seven judges in New Delhi, and set up smaller Benches in, say, four or six places across the country.

100. One Nation One FASTag

- Minister of Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari inaugurated the "One Nation One FASTag" scheme. The scheme will be implemented from December 1, 2019, and can be availed upon activation by new cars having Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags on national and state highways throughout the country.

- FASTags are stickers that are affixed to the windscreen of vehicles and use RFID technology to enable digital, contactless payment of tolls without having to stop at toll gates. The tags are linked to bank accounts and other payment methods. As a car crosses a toll plaza, the amount is automatically deducted, and a notification is sent to the registered mobile phone number. Sensors are placed on toll barriers, and the barriers open for vehicles having valid FASTags.
- A FASTag is valid for five years and needs to be recharged only as per requirement. At present, 60 lakh vehicles in India have FASTags. According to the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI), these devices will make passing through tolls considerably smoother since drivers will no longer have to carry cash or stop to make a transaction.
- The existing FASTags under various jurisdictions of states and agencies would be enabled under this scheme, thus integrating the collection of toll digitally so that seamless services can be provided to consumers all over India. The move is significant given that the Centre has decided that from December 1, all national highway toll plazas will accept tolls only through FASTags.

101. Justice A.K. Patnaik Committee

- A committee appointed by the Chhattisgarh government to **“review cases against Scheduled Tribes and other residents of the Naxal region in the state”** is set to begin its work this month. It will look at cases involving more than 23,000 tribals.
- The committee of Justice A K Patnaik, a retired judge of the Supreme Court, will hold its first meeting in Raipur on October 30 and 31 as it starts looking at cases of over 16,475 tribals accused by police in a range of cases and another 6,743 being held as undertrials, mostly in Bijapur, Sukma and Bastar districts.
- The terms of reference of the committee state that where it does not find material to continue matters against the accused, it would have the remit to recommend withdrawal of prosecution, dropping of cases in which police are yet to file a report before the court, or recommend appropriate plea bargaining, as laid out in the Code of Criminal Procedure.
- The buck on the recommendations of this committee will stop with the state government which will finally decide on the matters.

102. Global Hunger Index

- India slipped to 102 positions in the 2019 Global Hunger Index featuring 117 countries, behind Nepal, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Over one in every five children in India is “wasted” (low weight for height), the highest for any country in the report.
- The report, prepared jointly by Irish aid agency Concern Worldwide and German organisation Welt Hunger Hilfe has said India suffers from a level of hunger that is “serious”, at the very end of the category with a 30.1 GHI score.
- The GHI score is calculated on four indicators — **undernourishment; child wasting, the share of children under the age of five who are wasted (that is, who have low weight for their height, reflecting acute undernutrition); child stunting, children under the age of five who have low height for their age, reflecting chronic undernutrition; and child mortality, the mortality rate of children under the age of five.**

103. 'Pradhan Mantri Innovative Learning Programme-DHRUV'

- Union Human Resource Development Minister Shri Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' launched a unique initiative, the Pradhan Mantri Innovative Learning Programme-DHRUV, which will act as a turning point in the lives of extra ordinarily talented students, from the premises of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) Headquarters at Bengaluru.
- The new Programme DHRUV 'will act as a platform to explore the talent of outshining and meritorious students, and help them achieve excellence in their specific areas of interest may it be science, performing arts, creative writing, etc. In this way, these talented students will not only realize their full potential but also contribute to the society in a big way.
- The Pradhan Mantri Innovative Learning Programme has been started to identify and encourage talented children to enrich their skills and knowledge. In centres of excellence across the country, gifted children will be mentored and nurtured by renowned experts in different areas, so that they can reach their full potential. It is expected that many of the students selected will reach the highest levels in their chosen fields and bring laurels to their community, State and Nation.
- To begin with, it will cover two areas i.e. Science and Performing Arts. There are 60 students in all, 30 from each area. The 60 students come from across the country. The students have been broadly chosen from classes 9 to 12, from all schools including government and private.

104. Naga Peace talks

- Nagas are spread over Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur in India besides in parts of Myanmar. Ethnicity and tribal politics are deeply rooted in the region which have in some ways complicated the political and social life of people at large. The Naga peace talks reached their deadline on October 31st which a plan for a framework for building peace in the region.



- The British had annexed Assam in 1826, in which they subsequently created the Naga Hills district and went on to extend its boundaries. The assertion of Naga nationalism, which began during British rule, has continued after Independence, and even after Nagaland became a state.
- The talks seek to settle disputes that date back to colonial rule. The Nagas are not a single tribe, but an ethnic community that comprises several tribes who live in the state of Nagaland and its neighbourhood. One key demand of Naga groups has been a Greater Nagalim that would cover not only the state of Nagaland but parts of neighbouring states, and even of Myanmar.

History of Naga Issue

- The British had annexed Assam in 1826, in which they subsequently created the Naga Hills district and went on to extend its boundaries. The assertion of Naga nationalism, which began during British rule, has continued after Independence, and even after Nagaland became a state. Along the way, the unresolved issues gave rise to decades of insurgency that claimed thousands of lives, including of civilians.
- The earliest sign of Naga resistance dates back to 1918, with the formation of the Naga Club. In 1929, the Club famously told the Simon Commission “to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times”.
- In 1946, A Z Phizo formed the Naga National Council (NNC), which declared Naga independence on August 14, 1947, and then, in 1951, claimed to have conducted a referendum in which an overwhelming majority supported an independent Naga state. By the early 1950s, the NNC had taken up arms and gone underground. On March 22, 1952, Phizo formed the underground Naga Federal Government (NFG) and the Naga Federal Army. The government of India sent in the Army to crush the insurgency and, in 1958, enacted the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act. The NNC split in 1975, the breakaway group being the NSCN, which split further in later years, most prominently into the NSCN(I-M) (Thuingaleng Muivah) and NSCN (Khaplang) in 1988. The insurrection petered out by the mid-1970s but returned with more intensity in the form of the NSCN led by Mr. Muivah and S.S. Khaplang
- **1975:** In June 1947, Assam Governor Sir Akbar Hydari signed the Nine-Point Agreement with the moderates in the NNC but Phizo rejected it outright. A peace accord was signed in Shillong called the Shillong Accord, in which the NNC leadership agreed to give up arms. Several NNC leaders, including Isak Chishi Swu, Thuingaleng Muivah and S S Khaplang refused to accept the agreement and broke away to form the NSCN. In 1988 came another split, with Khaplang breaking away to form the NSCN (K) while Isak and Muivah headed the NSCN (I-M).
- **1997:** The NSCN (I-M) signed a ceasefire agreement with the government in 1997, preceded by rounds of talks since 1995. The key agreement was that there would be no counter-insurgency offensive against the NSCN (I-M), who in turn would not attack Indian forces. The NSCN (I-M) had then announced to “every citizen of Nagalim wherever they may be”, that a ceasefire agreement was entered into between the Government of India and the outfit “to bring about a lasting political solution to the long drawn out Indo-Naga issue”.
- **2015:** In August that year, the Centre signed a framework agreement with the NSCN (I-M). Prime Minister Narendra Modi described it as a “historic agreement” towards settling the “oldest insurgency” in India. This set the stage for the ongoing peace talks. In 2017, six other Naga armed outfits under the banner of the Naga National Political Groups (NNPGs) joined the talks.

Demands

- The map of Greater Nagalim
- In the NSCN(IM) vision, on the other hand, covers a 1,20,000 sq km sprawl across the Northeast and Myanmar – the area of Nagaland state itself is only 16,527 sq km, a fraction of this vision. Amid the anxiety this has caused among citizens in neighbouring states, state governments have assured them that their respective states’ territorial integrity would not be compromised.

- The government and the NSCN (I-M) have failed to agree on issues relating to a separate Naga flag and a constitution. In its latest statement, the NSCN (I-M) has said it will not budge from the demand for the flag and the constitution — and that it is looking for a lasting solution.

Neighbours' stance

- Arunachal Pradesh, Assam and Manipur are wary of the NSCN-IM's concept of Nagalim or Greater Nagaland that could lead to a redrawing of their boundaries. Manipur has begun protesting with Assembly Speaker Y. Khemchand Singh telling Mr. Modi in a petition that any compromise with Manipur's territorial integrity would not be tolerated. The other two States are "waiting and watching" following reports that the final peace deal could yield a pan-Naga cultural entity and territorial councils beyond Nagaland.
- Fortunately, the initial signs of restraint are seen on all sides with the conclusion of talks between interlocutor RN Ravi and NSCN (IM) leaders. The Meitei and Kuki communities which are major stakeholders in Manipur, have not resorted to violence. The Nagas have restrained from chest-thumping.

105. Ayodhya Dispute and Verdict

- A five judge bench of the Supreme Court headed by CJI Ranjan Gogoi delivered the verdict regarding the disputed site of Babri Masjid-Ram Janmabhoomi on 9th November 2019.
- Babri Masjid is the three-domed mosque that Mir Baqi, a commander in the Mughal army and then the Governor of Awadh built in the name of Emperor Babur, in 1528 in the Jaunpuri style, has been at the centre of the dispute.
- Francis Buchanan (also called Buchanan-Hamilton) did a survey of the Gorakhpur Division in 1813–14 on behalf of the British East India Company. Buchanan's report, never published but available in the British Library archives, states that the Hindus generally attributed destruction of temples "to the furious zeal of Aurangzabe [Aurangzeb]", but the large mosque at Ayodhya (now known as Babri Masjid) was ascertained to have been built by Babur by "an inscription on its walls".
- Many on the Mandir side believe that the birthplace of Lord Ram was exactly at the spot on which the Babri Masjid stood until December 6, 1992. The Supreme Court concluded that the masjid was built over a structure which was "non-Islamic".
- The dispute started from the colonial times itself. The first plea with regard to the Babri dispute came up on January 1, 1885 in the Faizabad district court by Mahant Raghubir Das seeking permission to create an outer canopy at the disputed structure. The Court however rejected the plea ruling that a temple could not be built on a spot just outside the mosque because it would cause communal problems.
- The idols of Ram Lalla were placed "surreptitiously" under the central dome of the Babri Masjid in 1949. The next year, Gopal Simla Visharad filed the first suit in the Faizabad civil court for rights to perform puja to Ram Lalla. Paramahansa Ramachandra Das filed a suit for continuation of puja and keeping idols in the structure.
- In 1959, the Nirmohi Akhara filed a third suit, seeking a direction to hand over charge of the disputed site. The U.P. Sunni Central Wakf Board filed the fourth suit in 1961 for declaration and possession and a fifth was filed in 1989 in the name of Ram Lalla Virajman for declaration and possession.

- In 1986, the district court ordered the removal of locks and opening of the site for Hindu worshippers. In 1991, the Uttar Pradesh government acquired land around the structure for the convenience of devotees coming for Ram Lalla darshan.
- In Dec 6, 1992, Babri Masjid demolished by nearly 2 lakh karsevaks. 'Acquisition of Certain Area at Ayodhya Act' was passed for acquiring land by Centre in the disputed area following which in 1993, the Centre took over 67 acres around the area and sought the Supreme Court's opinion on whether there existed a Hindu place of worship before the structure was built.
- Liberhan Commission was a long-running inquiry commissioned by the Government of India to investigate the destruction of the disputed structure Babri Masjid in Ayodhya in 1992. Led by retired High Court Judge M. S. Liberhan, it was formed on 16 December 1992 by an order of the Indian Home Union Ministry after the demolition of the Babri Masjid in Ayodhya on 6 December and the subsequent riots there.
- The Commission was originally mandated to submit its report within three months. Extensions were given 48 times, and after a delay of 17 years, the one-man commission submitted the report to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on 30 June 2009. In November 2009, a day after a newspaper published the allegedly leaked contents of the report, the report was tabled in Parliament by the Home Minister P. Chidambaram.
- The Supreme Court in the Ismail Faruqui case ruled that 'mosque' is not integral to Islam owing to the fact namaz can be offered anywhere. In 1994, the litigation reached the Lucknow Bench. The suits were heard from 1996 till September 2010.
- The Allahabad High Court in a 2:1 majority, rules three-way division of disputed area between Sunni Waqf Board, the Nirmohi Akhara and Ram Lalla. In August 2017 the Supreme Court constituted a three judge Bench to hear pleas challenging the 1994 Allahabad HC decision.
- In January 2019, the High Court constituted a five judge Constitution bench led by Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi and also comprising CJI-designate S.A. Bobde, D.Y. Chandrachud, Ashok Bhushan and S. Abdul Nazeer. CJI Ranjan Gogoi, who retires on November 17, decided the date of the verdict in consultation with the four other judges after 40 days of daily hearing, making it the second longest hearing in the top court. Under Article 142, the SC directed, in the scheme to be framed, Nirmohi Akhara, an order of ascetics, will also get representation. The Akhara's suit, one of the main parties in the case, was dismissed as the bench held that it was barred by limitation. The SC also rejected that Nirmohi Akhara is a shebait (manager) of the complex. "Land to remain vested in statutory receiver till trust is formed," ruled the court.
- The five-judge bench unanimously rejected the Shia Waqf Board petition, claiming that the rights on the Babri Masjid on the disputed land in Ayodhya were over that of the Sunni Waqf Board. The Supreme Court said that the 2003 Archaeology Survey of India's (ASI) report can't be dismissed as conjecture or just a guess work and junked the theory of pre-existence of an Idgah at the disputed site. "Babri mosque wasn't constructed on a vacant land. An underlying structure did exist," it said. The apex court also said that the underlying structure was not of Islamic religion. Artefacts, architectural evidence had distinct non-Islamic nature, said CJI Gogoi. At the same time, the top court also said, "But ASI report hasn't said the underlying structure was a specific temple."

- The central government shall, within three months, frame a scheme and make necessary provisions for the management of trust for construction of the temple at the disputed site. Sunni Waqf Board to be given a 5-acre alternate land at a prominent place in Ayodhya. Sunni Waqf Board at liberty to construct a mosque at the allotted land.

106. Jansankhya Sthirata Kosh

- **Jansankhya Sthirata Kosh (JSK), an autonomous body under Ministry of Health and Family Welfare,** implemented the following schemes:
 1. Prerna Scheme (for delaying marriage, childbirth and spacing),
 2. Santusht Scheme (Public Private Partnership for sterilization services), and
 3. NaConal Helpline (for information on family planning).
- The JSK as per cabinet decision has now been discontinued and has been subsumed under the National Health Mission. The schemes will now be under the NHM:
- **PRERNA, a Responsible Parenthood Strategy** in all districts of seven focus states namely Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Rajasthan.
- The strategy recognizes and awards couples who have broken the stereotype of early marriage, early childbirth and repeated child birth and have helped change the mindsets of the community. The scheme is meant only for BPL families.
- **Important Conditions**
 1. Couple must belong to BPL family
 2. Age of lady should not exceed 30 years
 3. The girl should have been married after 19 years
 4. First child birth after at least 2 years of marriage
 5. Second child birth after at least 3 years of the first child birth
 6. Either parent voluntarily accepts permanent method of family planning within one year of the second child birth

107. Census 2021

- The Ministry of Home Affairs informed that during Census 2021, a mix mode approach is being adopted for data collection. Census will be conducted in two phases, viz., House-listing & Housing Census during April to September, 2020 and Population Enumeration during February 09-28, 2021. The Census shall be conducted in 16 languages.
- Further, enumerators can collect and submit data directly through Mobile App using his /her smart phone or they can use paper schedule to collect data and submit the same through Mobile App. Alternatively, the enumerators can also use paper schedule only to collect and submit the data. The State Government appointed enumerators will only be able to use the App for collection of data.

- While beginning in 1872 under British Viceroy Lord Mayo, the first complete census was taken in 1881. Post 1949, the decennial Census of India has been conducted by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India. All the censuses since 1951 were conducted under the 1948 Census of India Act. The last census was held in 2011, whilst the next will be held in 2021.

108. Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh

The Ministry of Women and Child Development launched the **Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh** along with Bill and Melinda Gates foundation have launched the Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh (BPKK) which will be a **repository of diverse crops across 128 agro-climatic zones in India** for better nutritional outcomes. On this occasion, eminent agricultural scientist, Dr. M. S. Swaminathan, in his address, said that to make India nutrition secure a five-point action programme has to be implemented:

- Ensure calorie rich diet for women, expectant mothers and children
- Ensure intake of proteins in the form of pulses to eradicate protein hunger in women and children
- Eradicate hidden hunger due to deficiency of micro nutrients like vitamin A, vitamin B, Iron and Zinc
- Ensure clean drinking water supply
- Spreading nutrition literacy in every village particularly in mothers with children less than 100 days' old

109. Santusht Portal

- **'Santusht' - Implementation Monitoring Cell (IMC) has been constituted in the Office of Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Labour and Employment** in January 2020. The objective of 'Santusht' is to promote transparency, accountability, effective delivery of public services and implementation of policies, schemes of Ministry of Labour and Employment at grassroot level through constant monitoring.
- For public grievances, **Centralized Public Grievance Redresal and Monitoring System (CPGRAM)** portal is already functional. Besides, written grievances as received from stakeholders are also disposed by the Ministry. Further, online portal under 'Santusht' for public grievances has not been started so far.
- The Santusht Portal The portal aims to address the speedy redressal of grievances of workers and employers. It monitors services that are provided by the health insurance and EPFOs (Employment Provident Fund Organization). Also, it monitors the services provided by the ESICs (Employment State Insurance Corporation) to the formal sector workers.

110. Report on Building a 21st Century Health System for India

- **NITI Aayog released the report on 'Health Systems for a New India: Building Blocks—Potential Pathways to Reforms'.** Officials from NITI Aayog, policymakers, and representatives from national and international academia and Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation were also present for the event.

- Over the last few years, India has embarked on a journey towards providing improved access to high-quality, affordable healthcare for the most unreached and vulnerable population of the country. Many indicators, however, continue to show significant scope for improvement. The report is based on the data collected and provided by ACCESS Health International for the public sector and by PWC India for private sector.
- By placing health at the centre-stage of the policy narrative, this report charts a clear roadmap for the complete transformation of India's health system. It focuses on breaking silos in the health space and removing fragmentation between various initiatives, ensuring greater convergence between ministries as well as the Centre and states, as already initiated under Ayushman Bharat.
- The report identified 5 focus areas of future health system, deliver on unfinished Public health agenda, change health financing away from out of pocket so spend into large insurers, integrate service delivery vertically and horizontally, empower citizens to become beHer buyers of health, harness the power of digital health.
- Highlighting the need to build India's opportunities, the vision for health over the next fifteen years is to transform the delivery of health services in a way that they improve at a much greater pace, without financially burdening its citizens. A synthesis of all the discussions and efforts initiated at NITI Aayog's 'Development Dialogues' held on 30 November 2018, the report consolidates global findings on key health system themes of financing and provisioning, with a focus on risk pooling, strategic purchasing, health-service provisioning and digital health.

111. Jaccha-Baccha Survey

- A new survey, called the Jaccha-Baccha Survey (JABS), conducted in June in six states (Chhattisgarh, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh) to map the state of pregnant and nursing women has found that a high proportion of women do not eat enough during pregnancy. The survey was conducted under the guidance of development economists Jean Dreze and Reetika Khera.
- Within the six states, which the survey divided into laggard and leader states, Uttar Pradesh, which is India's most populous, performed the worst, while Himachal Pradesh, on average, performed the best. He latest Global Hunger Index released in October pegged India at a lowly 102 out of a total of 117 countries. One of the key endings of GHI was that 'child wasting' (that is, children having low weight for their height) – which essentially shows the extent of acute malnutrition – had gone up over the past decade. At almost 21%, India's child wasting level is the highest in the world.

112. Sabrimala Verdict-Points to Remember

- The majority of Judges in the Sabrimala verdict contended that pending cases regarding entry of Muslim Women in Durgah/Mosque (being Writ Pettition (Civil) No.472 of 2019); of Parsi Women married to a non-Parsi in the Agyari (being Special Leave Petition (Civil) No. 18889/2012); and including the practice of female genital mutilation in Dawoodi Bohra community (being Writ Petition (Civil) No.286 of 2017) may be overlapping and covered by the judgment under review with Sabrimala to a larger 7 Judge Bench.

113. Muslim women's entry into mosques and dargahs

- The petition contended that “there is nothing in the Quran and the Hadith that requires gender segregation” and added that “the act of prohibition of females from entering Mosque is void and unconstitutional as such practices are not only repugnant to the basic dignity of a woman as an individual but also violaAve of the fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 14, 15, 21 and 25 of the Constitution”.

114. Female genital mutilation among Dawoodi Bohras

- The Dawoodi Bohras are a sect within the Ismā'īlī branch of Shia Islam. The largest populations of Dawoodi Bohras reside in India, Pakistan, Yemen, East Africa and the Middle East. The petition, filed under Aritcle 32 of the Constitution, had questioned the constitutionality of the practice of female genital mutilation (FGM) or 'khatna', or female circumcision (FC) or 'khafd', which the petitioner said was carried out on every girl child in the Dawoodi Bohra community.
- The “archaic ritual” of FGM, the petition argued, was carried out without any scientific medical reason, and without any reference in the Quran, and inflicted “atrocitiy, bodily pain, inhumanness, and mental torture” on innocent girls and women, the burden of which they were forced to carry for the rest of their lives. The petition relied on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and urged that the practice is violative of Article 21 (right to life and personal liberty).
- It contended that FGM should be regarded as an offence under the Indian Penal Code. A counter affidavit was filed resisting the stand of the petitioner, which submimed that the practice was almost 1,400 years old, and that it was an integral part of the religion of the Dawoodi Bohra community – and therefore, protected under Article 26 of the Constitution (right of religious groups to manage their own affairs).

115. Entry of Parsi women married to non-Parsis in the Agyari

- The Special Leave Petition in 'Goolrukh Gupta vs Burjur Pardiwala' arose out of a judgment passed by the Gujarat High Court in 2012. The HC had upheld the Valsad Parsi Anjuman's right to stop a Parsi woman from visiting the Tower of Silence to perform her father's last rites in the event of his death.
- The HC upheld the Parsi Anjuman's contention that having married a non-Parsi under The Special Marriage Act, 1954, a woman was no longer a Parsi, and was instead deemed to have become Hindu.

116. Essentiality test in Religion

- The larger Bench reference will also re-evaluate the “essential religious practice test”, a contentious doctrine evolved by the court to protect only such religious practices which were essential and integral to the religion. The doctrine of “essentiality” was invented by a seven-judge Bench of the Supreme Court in the
- ‘Shirur Mum’ case in 1954. The court held that the term “religion” will cover all rituals and practices “integral” to a religion, and took upon itself the responsibility of determining the essential and non-essential practices of a religion.

- Last year, a Supreme Court Bench by a 2-1 majority declined to refer for reconsideration by a larger Bench the five-judge Constitution Bench judgment in 'Dr M Ismail Faruqui and Ors vs Union of India and Ors' (October 24, 1994), which upheld the law under which the Centre acquired the disputed land in Ayodhya on which the Babri Masjid had stood. The Constitution Bench had ruled in 1994 that "A mosque is not an essential part of the practice of the religion of Islam and namaz (prayer) by Muslims can be offered anywhere, even in open."

117. Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019

- The Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019 was introduced by the Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Dr. Harsh Vardhan in Lok Sabha on July 15, 2019. The Bill defines surrogacy as a practice where a woman gives birth to a child for an intending couple with the intention to hand over the child after the birth to the intending couple.
- **Regulation of surrogacy:** The Bill prohibits commercial surrogacy, but allows altruistic surrogacy. Altruistic surrogacy involves no monetary compensation to the surrogate mother other than the medical expenses and insurance coverage during the pregnancy. Commercial surrogacy includes surrogacy or its related procedures undertaken for a monetary benefit or reward (in cash or kind) exceeding the basic medical expenses and insurance coverage.

Purposes for which surrogacy are permitted

Surrogacy is permitted when it is:

- for intending couples who suffer from proven infertility;
- altruistic;
- not for commercial purposes;
- not for producing children for sale, prostitution or other forms of exploitation; and
- For any condition or disease specified through regulations.

Eligibility criteria for intending couple

The intending couple should have a 'certificate of essentiality' and a 'certificate of eligibility' issued by the appropriate authority.

A certificate of essentiality will be issued upon fulfilment of the following conditions:

- a certificate of proven infertility of one or both members of the intending couple from a District Medical Board;
- an order of parentage and custody of the surrogate child passed by a Magistrate's court; and
- Insurance coverage for a period of 16 months covering postpartum delivery complications for the surrogate

The certificate of eligibility to the intending couple is issued upon fulfilment of the following conditions

- the couple being Indian citizens and married for at least five years;
- between 23 to 50 years old (wife) and 26 to 55 years old (husband);

- they do not have any surviving child (biological, adopted or surrogate); this would not include a child who is mentally or physically challenged or suffers from life threatening disorder or fatal illness; and
- Other conditions that may be specified by regulations.

Eligibility criteria for surrogate mother

To obtain a certificate of eligibility from the appropriate authority, the surrogate mother has to be:

- a close relative of the intending couple;
- a married woman having a child of her own;
- 25 to 35 years old;
- a surrogate only once in her lifetime; and
- possess a certificate of medical and psychological fitness for surrogacy. Further, the surrogate mother cannot provide her own gametes for surrogacy.

Appropriate authority

The central and state governments shall appoint one or more appropriate authorities within 90 days of the Bill becoming an Act. The functions of the appropriate authority include;

- granting, suspending or cancelling registration of surrogacy clinics;
- enforcing standards for surrogacy clinics;
- investigating and taking action against breach of the provisions of the Bill;
- recommending modifications to the rules and regulations

Registration of surrogacy clinics

- Surrogacy clinics cannot undertake surrogacy related procedures unless they are registered by the appropriate authority. Clinics must apply for registration within a period of 60 days from the date of appointment of the appropriate authority.

National and State Surrogacy Boards

The central and the state governments shall constitute the National Surrogacy Board (NSB) and the State Surrogacy Boards (SSB), respectively. Functions of the NSB include,

- advising the central government on policy matters relating to surrogacy;
- laying down the code of conduct of surrogacy clinics; and
- supervising the functioning of SSBs

Parentage and abortion of surrogate child

- A child born out of a surrogacy procedure will be deemed to be the biological child of the intending couple. An abortion of the surrogate child requires the women consent of the surrogate mother and the authorisation of the appropriate authority. This authorisation must be compliant with the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971. Further, the surrogate mother will have an option to withdraw from surrogacy before the embryo is implanted in her womb.

Offences and penalties

The offences under the Bill include:

- undertaking or advertising commercial surrogacy;
- exploiting the surrogate mother;
- abandoning, exploiting or disowning a surrogate child; and
- Selling or importing human embryo or gametes for surrogacy. The penalty for such offences is imprisonment up to 10 years and a fine up to 10 lakh rupees. The Bill specifies a range of offences and penalties for other contraventions of the provisions of the Bill

118. Review of Ayodhya Verdict

- Maulana Syed Ashhad Rashidi, a legal heir of original Ayodhya land dispute litigant filed a review petition in the Supreme Court against its ruling in favour of the Ram temple at the disputed site.
 - ✓ This is the first review petition filed by a Muslim party against the verdict that had ordered a 5- acre plot be given to the Sunni Board by the government because the community had been wronged more than once.
- The petition clarified that it was seeking a review of the verdict on 14 points, not the judgment in its entirety.
 - ✓ It argued that the court could not treat the deity as a perpetual minor for the purposes of limitation, could not correct historical wrongs and could not treat historical accounts as conclusive.
 - ✓ It also stressed that a finding on title could not be based on archaeological findings.
- **Article 137** enables the Supreme Court to review its own judgments, subject to the provisions of any law made by Parliament. This power is exercisable under rules made by the court under article 145. Review will lie in the Supreme Court on the following grounds:
 - ✓ Discovery of new important matters of evidence
 - ✓ Mistake or error on the face of the record; and
 - ✓ Any other sufficient reason.
- The normal principle is that a judgment pronounced by the Court is final, and departure from that principle is justified only when circumstances of a substantial and compelling character make it necessary to do so.

119. India Pavilion at COP-25 in Madrid, Spain

- Secretary, Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change (MOEFCC), Shri C.K. Mishra inaugurated the India Pavilion at the 25th session of Conference of Parties under the UN framework convention of Climate Change (UNFCCC COP25), in Madrid, Spain. This year India is celebrating 150 years of the birth anniversary of Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi.
- The India Pavilion has been designed to depict this theme, in particular Mahatma Gandhi's life and messages around sustainable living.

- ✓ To mark the 150th anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Pavilion features the humble 'Charkha' or the spinning wheel which is the physical embodiment of the Gandhian principles of perseverance, self-sufficiency and sustainability.
- The India Pavilion at COP 25, Madrid displays India's climate action across a range of sectors, covering both activities for mitigation and adaptation.

120. Parliament passes the Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (Merger of Union Territories) Bill, 2019

- Parliament passed the Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (Merger of Union Territories) Bill, 2019.
- The bill has been brought to provide for merger of union territories of Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, in view of fruitful utilization of manpower, improve administrative efficiency, reduce administrative expenditure and improve service delivery as well as facilitate better monitoring of schemes.

121. Cabinet Nod to Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019

- The Bill seeks to amend The Citizenship Act, 1955 to make Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian illegal migrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, eligible for citizenship of India.
- In other words, the Bill intends to make it easier for non-Muslim immigrants from India's three Muslim-majority neighbours to become citizens of India. Under The Citizenship Act, 1955, one of the requirements for citizenship by naturalisation is that the applicant must have resided in India during the last 12 months, as well as for 11 of the previous 14 years.
- The amendment relaxes the second requirement from 11 years to 6 years as a specific condition for applicants belonging to these six religions, and the aforementioned three countries. Under The Citizenship Act, 1955, a person who is born in India, or has Indian parentage, or has resided in India over a specified period of time, is eligible for Indian citizenship. Illegal migrants cannot become Indian citizens.
- Under the Act, an illegal migrant is a foreigner who:
 - ✓ enters the country without valid travel documents like a passport and visa, or
 - ✓ Enters with valid documents, but stays beyond the permitted time period.
- Illegal migrants may be put in jail or deported under The Foreigners Act, 1946 and The Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920. However, in 2015 and 2016, the government exempted specified groups of illegal migrants from provisions of the 1946 and 1920 Acts. They were Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, who reached India on or before December 31, 2014.

122. Oath taken by Ministers in India

- Article 164(3) says: "Before a Minister enters upon his office, the Governor shall administer to him the oaths of office and of secrecy according to the forms set out for the purpose in the Third

Schedule.” The Third Schedule requires the taker of the oath to either “swear in the name of God” or to “solemnly affirm” to “bear true faith and allegiance to the Constitution”.

- According to constitutional experts and those familiar with procedures and rules of swearing-in ceremonies, Art 164 makes it clear that the text of the oath is sacrosanct, and the person taking the oath has to read it out exactly as it is, in the given format. If a person wanders from the text, it is the responsibility of the person administering the oath – in these instances the Governor – to interrupt and ask the person being sworn in to read it out correctly.
- Thackeray invoked Chattrapati Shivaji and “my parents”; Eknath Shinde named Bal Thackeray, Ananda Dhige, a Thane Shiv Sena leader who died in 2000, Uddhav Thackeray, and Shivaji. Subhash Desai invoked Bal Thackeray. Jayant Patil of the NCP invoked Shivaji and Sharad Pawar. Chhagan Bhujbal began with Jai Shivraj, Jai Maharashtra, and invoked Mahatma Phule, Chattrapati Shahu, Babasaheb Ambedkar, Bal Thackeray, and Sharad Pawar.
- The Governor’s approval is key According to experts, if the person administering the oath approves the oath, the matter is closed. Immediately on taking the oath, the person who has been sworn in, must sign a register. The register is attested by the Secretary to the Governor, which means it has been approved by the Governor.

123. Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019

- The Lok Sabha on 10 December passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2019. The Bill seeks to amend the **Citizenship Act of 1955** to make it easier to grant Indian Citizenship to persons belonging to **Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian communities** who have migrated to India after facing persecution on grounds of religion in **Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh**, if they fulfill conditions for grant of citizenship.
- The Citizenship Act, 1955 regulates who may acquire Indian citizenship and on what grounds. A person may become an Indian citizen if they are **born in India or have Indian parentage or have resided in the country for a period of time**, etc. However, illegal migrants are prohibited from acquiring Indian citizenship. An illegal migrant is a foreigner who:
 - ✓ enters the country without valid travel documents, like a passport and visa, or
 - ✓ enters with valid documents, but stays beyond the permitted time period.

Timeline and Events

- Illegal migrants may be imprisoned or deported under the **Foreigners Act, 1946 and the Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920**. The 1946 and the 1920 Acts empower the central government to regulate the entry, exit and residence of foreigners within India.
- In 2015 and 2016, the central government issued two notifications exempting certain groups of illegal migrants from provisions of the 1946 and the 1920 Acts. These groups are Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, who arrived in India on or before **December 31, 2014**. This implies that these groups of illegal migrants will not be deported or imprisoned for being in India without valid documents.

- In 2016, a Bill was introduced to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955. The Bill sought to make illegal migrants belonging to these six religions and three countries eligible for citizenship and made some changes in the provisions on registration of Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) cardholders.
- The 2016 Bill was referred to a **Joint Parliamentary Committee**, which submitted its report on January 7, 2019. The Bill was passed by Lok Sabha on January 8, 2019. However, it lapsed with the dissolution of the 16th Lok Sabha. Subsequently, the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 is being introduced in Lok Sabha in December 2019.

124. Important Components of the Bill

- The Bill seeks to amend The Citizenship Act, 1955 to make Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian illegal migrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan, eligible for citizenship of India.
- The cutoff date for the citizenship is December 31st, 2014.
- Under The Citizenship Act, 1955, one of the requirements for citizenship by naturalisation is that the applicant must have resided in India during the last 12 months, as well as for 11 of the previous 14 years.
- The amendment relaxes the second requirement from **11 years to 6 years** as a specific condition for applicants belonging to these six religions, and the aforementioned three countries.
- The Bill says that on acquiring citizenship:
 - ✓ such persons shall be deemed to be citizens of India from the date of their entry into India, and
 - ✓ All legal proceedings against them in respect of their illegal migration or citizenship will be closed.
 - ✓ The Bill also seeks to amend the Third Schedule to the Citizenship Act to make applicants belonging to the said communities from the aforesaid countries eligible for citizenship by naturalisation if they can establish their residency in India for five years instead of the existing eleven years.
- Further, the Bill adds that the provisions on citizenship for illegal migrants will not apply to the **tribal areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, or Tripura, as included in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution**. These tribal areas include Karbi Anglong (in Assam), Garo Hills (in Meghalaya), Chakma District (in Mizoram), and Tripura Tribal Areas District. It will also not apply to the areas under the Inner Line” under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873.
- The **Inner Line Permit** regulates visit of Indians to Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Nagaland.
- Further, like the 2016 Bill it also seeks to amend grounds for cancellation of OCI registration. The Citizenship Act provides that the central government may cancel registration of OCIs on **five grounds** including registration through fraud, showing disaffection to the Constitution, engaging with the enemy during war, necessity in the interest of sovereignty of India, security of state or public interest, or if within five years of registration the OCI has been sentenced to imprisonment for two years or more.
- When the Bill was passed in Lok Sabha, **Section 7D** is sought to be amended to **limit the disqualification to violations of the Citizenship Act or of any other law so notified by the central government**. Also, the cardholder has to be given an opportunity to be heard.

125. CAA Protests

- The Citizenship Amendment Act Act that proposes that all Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi or Christian refugees from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan, who entered into India on or before the 31st day of December, 2014 without any valid travel documents such as passport, will be granted citizenship by naturalization on applying for the same, subject to certain easy to fulfill conditions.

Why the Protests?

- The CAA is seen as being violative of the basic structure of the Constitution which was established by the Supreme Court in Keshavananda Bharti case.
- This case established the supremacy of the Constitution, India's foundations as a republic, and emphasised the importance of the Preamble that stressed on Equality (of status and opportunity) and Justice (social, economic and political).
- Inherent values of secularism, equality and non-discrimination are India's constitutional ideals and aspirations which inspired the country in its struggle for independence.
- **Equality (Article 14), right to life (Article 21) and non-discrimination (Article 15) are key Constitutional principles that this Act violates.**
- Although the word secular was added by 42nd amendment in 1976, the case which was decided in 1973 had made it clear that while interpreting the Constitution, it should be done while taking the Preamble into consideration.
- To name a few, Rohingyas from Myanmar, Tamils from Sri Lanka (Muslim or Hindu!), Ahmadiyyas from Pakistan are a few examples of people who have faced religious persecution but are not being protected under the Act.

What are the implications of the Act for Muslims who have been living in India?

- There are concerns that this fundamental, statutory exclusion could, by manipulation and interpretation also impact those Indian Muslims who have never migrated, have always lived here for generations, but will subsequently be required to produce a slew of documents hitherto not available to over 40% of Indians. (especially as and when the NPR-NRC exercise is launched).

Why is the cut-off date set as 31st December, 2014?

- The government has not provided any justification for this cut-off date. There has been no significant event or incident that has prompted this to be the cut-off date, at best it is arbitrary.

Will the law only give refuge to “persecuted religious minorities”?

- Although the premise of the law has been to give refuge to “persecuted religious minorities”, the law is silent on this in its provisions.
- The law simply gives all illegal migrants, irrespective of the reason for their migration, from these 3 countries the provision to obtain easy citizenship.

Who is exempted from application of provisions of Citizenship Amendment Act?

- Clause 4 of section 6(B), states as follows:

- “Nothing in this section shall apply to tribal area of Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram or Tripura as included in the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution and the area covered under “The Inner Line” notified under the Bengal
- Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873. Union Home Minister, Amit Shah mentioned that Manipur will be brought under Inner Line Permit regime and effectively out of the purview of Citizenship Amendment Act.

Does India have a repatriation treaty with Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan?

- Repatriation is the process of sending someone back or returning someone to their place of origin. Once the government determines the nationality of the illegal migrants (as per the Act), ideally, they should be sent back to their home country. However, India does not have an arrangement or agreement with any of these countries to repatriate migrants back to these countries. Furthermore India lacks a clearcut refugee policy as well and relies on political environment in its treatment of refugees. Further, India is not party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol.

126. Global Refugee Forum

- In December 2018, the U.N. created the Global Compact on Refugees in a bid to establish a strong, universal and fair response to the crisis. The global compact on refugees aims to strengthen the international response to large movements of refugees and protracted refugee situations. Its four key objectives are to:
 - ✓ Ease the pressures on host countries;
 - ✓ Enhance refugee self-reliance;
 - ✓ Expand access to third-country solutions;
 - ✓ Support conditions in countries of origin for return in safety and dignity.
- The first ever Global Refugee Forum brings together refugees heads of State and Government, UN leaders, international institutions, development organizations, business leaders and civil society representatives, among others at the United Nations in Geneva. It was jointly hosted by the UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency and the government of Switzerland on December 17-18, 2019.
- The U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stressed on developed nations to reverse "restrictive policies" on refugees and share more of the burden of sheltering the highest number of displaced people ever recorded.
- Encouraging support for greater burden-sharing by all countries, Switzerland Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis noted that his country had committed around \$125 million over the next four years to refugee protection.

127. Pandit Madan Mohan Malviya National Mission on Teachers and Training

- The Central Sector Scheme of Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya National Mission on Teachers & Teaching (PMMMNMTT) was launched in December, 2014 and has been decided to be continued till March 2020.

- The aim of this mission is to **provide quality teachers in schools and colleges attract talented people in the education sector and improve quality in teaching.** The mission aims to set the teaching standard so that an organized cadre of professional teachers can be created. The objective of this mission is to develop innovative teaching method and high level institutional facilities in all the constituent areas of education.

128. The Recycling of Ships Bill, 2019

- Parliament passed a landmark “**The Recycling of Ships Bill 2019**” for Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships in India. The existing Shipbreaking Code (revised), 2013 and the provisions of the Hong Kong Convention, 2009 are dovetailed in this Bill. **The Bill, upon becoming Act,** will ensure environment friendly recycling process of Ships and adequate safety of the yard workers.
- India is a leader in the global ship recycling industry with a share of over 30 per cent of the global market. Now, ships to be recycled in India will need to obtain a ‘Ready for Recycling Certificate’ in accordance with the Hong Kong Convention. The Key Benefits of the bill are as follows:
 - ✓ The bill will harbinger significant increased number of global ships entering into Indian Shipyards for Recycling.
 - ✓ Recycling of Ships will boost business & employment opportunities and strengthen India’s position in the recycling industry.
 - ✓ It will raise the brand value of our Ships Recycling Yards located at Alang in Gujarat, Mumbai Port, and Kolkata Port & Azhikkal in Kerala.
 - ✓ 10% of country’s Secondary steel needs, as an outcome of Recycling of Ships, will be met in an eco-friendly manner.
 - ✓ Ships recycling facilities will become compliant to International standards and Ships will be recycled only in such authorized facilities.
 - ✓ The tremendous growth of business activities will contribute to the country’s GDP.

129. Data Bank of Farmers

- The Department of Agriculture, Cooperation and Farmers Welfare has constituted a Task Force to develop a comprehensive Farmers’ Database for better planning, monitoring, strategy formulation and smooth implementation of schemes for the entire country.
- This Centralized Farmers Database shall be useful for various activities like issuing soil health cards, dissemination of crop advisories to the farmers, precision farming, smart cards for farmers to facilitate e-governance, crop insurance, settlement of compensation claims, grant of agricultural subsidies, community/village resource centers etc.

130. Livestock Census 2019

- Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying has released the 20th Livestock Census 2019. The livestock census is conducted across the country periodically since 1919. The census usually covers all domesticated animals and head counts of these

- Animals are taken. So far, 19 Livestock Censuses were conducted in participation with State Governments and UT Administrations. The 20th Livestock Census was launched during the month of October, 2018. The enumeration was done in both rural and urban areas.
- Various species of animals (cattle, buffalo, mithun, yak, sheep, goat, pig, horse, pony, mule, donkey, camel, dog, rabbit and elephant)/poultry birds (fowl, duck and other poultry birds) possessed by the
- Households, household enterprises/non-household enterprises were counted at that site. Another important feature of 20th Livestock Census is it has been designed to capture Breed-wise number of animals and poultry birds.
- For the first time, livestock data were collected online in 20th Livestock Census. Advance technology has been adopted to collect data through tablet computers. The National Informatics Centre, Ministry
- Of Electronics & IT has developed Android based mobile application for data collection with various features such as data entry module to facilitate recording the data on tablets, web-based work application, local government directory codes etc.
- The total Livestock population is 535.78 million in the country showing an increase of 4.6% over Livestock Census 2012
- Total Bovine population (Cattle, Buffalo, Mithun and Yak) is 302.79 Million in 2019 which shows an increase of 1.0% over the previous census.
- The total number of cattle in the country is 192.49 million in 2019 showing an increase of 0.8 % over previous Census.
- The Female Cattle (Cows population) is 145.12 million, increased by 18.0% over the previous census (2012).
- The Exotic/Crossbred and Indigenous/Non-descript Cattle population in the country is 50.42 million and 142.11 million respectively.
- The Indigenous/Non-descript female cattle population has increased by 10% in 2019 as compared to previous census.
- The population of the total Exotic/Crossbred Cattle has increased by 26.9% in 2019 as compared to previous census.
- The total milch animals (in-milk and dry) in cows and buffaloes are 125.34 Million, an increase of 6.0% over the previous census.

131. National Ganga Council

- National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection and Management of River Ganga is an authority created in October 2016 under the River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities Order, 2016, dissolving the National Ganga River Basin Authority. In this backdrop, **National Ganga Council has been established as an authority and National Mission for Clean Ganga has been also converted into an authority.**

- The National Ganga Council will be overall responsible for the superintendence, direction, development and control of River Ganga and the entire River Basin (including financial and administrative matters) for the protection, prevention, control and abatement of environmental pollution in River Ganga and its rejuvenation to its natural and pristine condition and to ensure continuous adequate flow of water in the River Ganga and for matters connected therewith.
- The National Ganga Council **may consult experts and expert organizations or institutions in the field of river rejuvenation, river ecology and river management, hydrology, environmental engineering, social mobilisation and other relevant fields.** The Council shall consist of:
 - ✓ Prime Minister will be the ex-officio Chairperson for the council
 - ✓ Union Minister for Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation will be the ex-officio Vice-Chairperson.
 - ✓ The ex-officio members of the council.
 - ❖ Union Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change
 - ❖ Union Minister for Finance
 - ❖ Union Minister for Urban Development
 - ❖ Union Minister for Rural Development
 - ❖ Union Minister for Power, Union Minister for Science and Technology
 - ❖ Union Minister for Drinking Water and Sanitation
 - ❖ Union Minister of State for Tourism
 - ❖ Union Minister for Shipping
 - ❖ Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog
 - ❖ Chief Ministers of Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal
- Secretary to Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation will be The Director General of National Mission for Clean Ganga will serve as the ex-officio Member Secretary.
- The **Headquarter of the National Ganga Council shall be at New Delhi or at such other place as it may decide.** The council shall have its Secretariat in the National Mission for Clean Ganga.
- The Central Government in the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation shall serve as the nodal Ministry.
- Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi chaired the first meeting of the National Ganga Council in Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh today. The Council has been given overall responsibility for superintendence of pollution prevention and rejuvenation of River Ganga Basin, including Ganga and its tributaries.
- The first meeting of the Council was aimed at reinforcing the importance of a 'Ganga-centric' approach in all departments of the concerned states as well as relevant Central Ministries.

132. FSSAI's Hygiene Rating Scheme

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), FSSAI's Hygiene Rating Scheme is a user driven, technology-enabled scheme **applicable to food businesses supplying food directly to consumers either on or off the premise**. Food businesses are rated on the basis of food hygiene and safety conditions found at the time of inspection and are given a score between (five to one) as per their hygiene and food safety compliance. This scheme has been recently introduced for food service sector such as hotels & restaurants, cafeterias, etc.
- The main purpose of this scheme is to:
 - ✓ Allow consumers to make an informed food choice about where to eat and inculcate right eating habits.
 - ✓ Encourage food businesses to adopt high hygiene standards and to sustain them so as to showcase the same to their consumers.

133. SDG India Index

- NITI Aayog will launch the second edition of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) India Index, which documents the progress made by India's States and Union Territories towards implementing the 2030 SDG targets, on 30 December 2019 at NITI Aayog, New Delhi.
- The SDG India Index and Dashboard 2019-20 have been developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), the United Nations in India, and the Global Green Growth Institute.
- NITI Aayog has the mandate of overseeing the adoption and monitoring of SDGs in the country, at the national and sub-national level.
- The SDG India Index, whose first edition was launched in December 2018, was the first tool developed by any large country to monitor the progress towards achieving SDGs at the sub-national level.
- The SDG India Index and Dashboard 2019 tracks the progress of and ranks all States and UTs on 100 indicators drawn from MoSPI's National Indicator Framework, comprising 306 indicators. It indicates where the country and its States and UTs currently are on SDG implementation, and charts the distance to be travelled to reach the SDG targets.
- The Index covers 16 out of 17 SDGs and a qualitative assessment on Goal 17. This marks an improvement over the 2018 Index, which covered only 13 goals.

134. Atal Bhujal Yojana

- **The World Bank has approved Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY), a Rs.6,000 Crore Central Sector Scheme, for sustainable management of ground water resources with community participation.**
- The funding pattern is 50:50 between Government of India and World Bank.
- The scheme envisages active participation of the communities in various activities such as formation of Water User Associations, monitoring and disseminating ground water data, water budgeting,

preparation and implementation of Gram-Panchayat wise water security plans and Information, Education & Communication (IEC) activities related to sustainable ground water management.

- The identified over-exploited and water stressed areas for the implementation of the scheme fall in the States of Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- The States have been selected according to a number of criteria, including degree of groundwater exploitation and degradation, established legal and regulatory instruments, institutional readiness, and experience in implementing initiatives related to groundwater management.

135. National Population Register

- India is set to update its **National Population register - an exhaustive database of 'usual residents' of India**. Union Cabinet on Tuesday announced that it has allocated around Rs 3,500 crores for updating National Population Register (NPR). The process shall commence from April next year and will be completed by September.
- NPR was first done in 2010 and was later updated in 2015 when it was linked with the Aadhar. But since the announcement of the NPR update has come in the middle of a raging controversy on the National Register of Citizens (NRC), there is widespread confusion between the two. Many have also confused the National Population Register with Census, which is also due. Census is conducted under the provisions of the Census Act 1948.
- The NPR is a register of the usual residents of the country. It contains information collected at the local (village/sub-town), subdistrict, district, state and national level under provisions of the Citizenship Act, 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.
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- A usual resident is defined, for the purposes of the NPR, as a person who has resided in a local area for the past six months or more, or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next six months.
- The law compulsorily seeks to register every citizen of India and issue a national identity card.
- The process of updating NPR will be carried out under the aegis of the Registrar General and ex-Officio Census Commissioner, India.
- The objective of the NPR is to create a comprehensive identity database of every usual resident in the country. The database would contain demographic particulars such as:
 - ✓ Name
 - ✓ Relationship to head of household
 - ✓ Father's name
 - ✓ Mother's name

- ✓ Spouse's name (if married)
 - ✓ Sex
 - ✓ Date of birth
 - ✓ Marital status
 - ✓ Place of birth
 - ✓ Nationality (as declared)
 - ✓ Present address of usual residence
 - ✓ Duration of stay at present address
 - ✓ Permanent residential address
 - ✓ Occupation
 - ✓ Educational qualification
- During the NPR, a respondent will not require to produce any document. As per a statement was given by Home Minister Amit Shah to news agency ANI, NPR information will be self-attested, that is, whatever information is provided by the respondent will be deemed correct and no documents or biometric would be required.
 - The process of collecting information for NPR will start in April 2020 and will be completed by September. NPR will be conducted across India, except Assam as the state has already gone through the National Register of Citizens. Gazette notification for the forthcoming NPR has been published by the central government in August.

136. Atal Bhujal Yojana (ATAL JAL)

- ATAL JAL has been designed with the principal objective of strengthening the institutional framework for participatory groundwater management and bringing about behavioral changes at the community level for sustainable groundwater resource management in seven States, viz. Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.
- Implementation of the scheme is expected to benefit nearly 8350 Gram Panchayats in 78 districts in these States. ATAL JAL will promote panchayat led ground water management and behavioural change with primary focus on demand side management
- Out of the total outlay of Rs. 6000 crore to be implemented over a period of 5 years (2020-21 to 2024-25), 50% shall be in the form of World Bank loan, and be repaid by the Central Government. The remaining 50%
- Shall be through Central Assistance from regular budgetary support. The en.re World Bank's loan component and Central Assistance shall be passed on to the States as Grants.

137. Tunnel under Rohtang Pass

- The historic decision to construct a strategic tunnel below the Rohtang Pass was taken by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

- The 8.8-kilometre long tunnel is the world's longest tunnel above an altitude of 3,000 metres. It will reduce the distance between Manali and Leh by 46 kilometres and save crores of rupees in transport costs. It is a 10.5-metre wide single tube bi-lane tunnel with a fire proof emergency tunnel built into the main tunnel itself.
- The breakthrough from both ends was achieved on October 15, 2017. The tunnel is now nearing completion and is a step in the direction of providing all weather connectivity to remote border areas of Himachal Pradesh and Ladakh which otherwise remained cut off from the rest of the country for about six months during winters.

138. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana

- Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana reached One Crore Beneficiaries in 2019. **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), a flagship scheme of the Government for pregnant women and lactating mothers has achieved a significant milestone by crossing one crore beneficiaries.**
- The total amount disbursed to the beneficiaries under the scheme has crossed Rs. 4,000 crores.
- PMMVY is a direct benefit transfer (DBT) scheme under which cash benefits are provided to pregnant women in their bank account directly to meet enhanced nutritional needs and partially compensate for wage loss. Implementation of the scheme started with effect from 01.01.2017.
- Under the 'Scheme', Pregnant Women and Lactating Mothers (PW&LM) receive a cash benefit of Rs. 5,000 in three instalments on fulfilling the respective conditionality, viz. early registration of pregnancy, ante-natal check-up and registration of the birth of the child and completion of first cycle of vaccination for the first living child of the family.
- The eligible beneficiaries also receive cash incentive under Janani Suraksha Yojana (JSY). Thus, on an average, a woman gets Rs. 6,000.

139. Begum Hazrat Mahal Girls Scholarships

- In year 2019, celebrating 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Ministry of Minority Affairs provided "Begum Hazrat Mahal Girls Scholarships" to 3 lakh economically backward girls belonging to the six notified Minority communities.
- The six notified minorities include- Jain, Parsi, Buddhist, Christian, Sikh and Muslim. The scholarship is provided by the Maulana Azad Education Foundation (MAEF), Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India.
- The scholarship aims to provide tuition fee assistance along with other benefits to the meritorious girl students of the minority community who are unable to support their education due to financial issues. Students adhering to the following criteria can apply:
 - ✓ Only girl students belonging to Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, and Parsi communities are eligible for this scholarship.
 - ✓ They must be studying in class 9 to 12.
 - ✓ The annual family income of the student should be less than INR 2 Lakhs.

- ✓ The students must have secured a minimum of 50% marks (in aggregate) in the previous class. The eligible students will get a scholarship to look after their expenditure on admission and course or tuition fee and maintenance allowance:
- ✓ For girls studying in Class 9 and 10: INR 5,000 each
- ✓ For girls studying in Class 11 and 12: INR 6,000 each

140. Haj

- India has become the first country in the entire world which has made the entire Haj 2020 process 100 per cent digital. Online application, E-Visa, Haj mobile app, “E-MASIHA” health facility, “E-luggage pre-tagging” providing all information in India itself regarding accommodation/transportation in Makkah Madinah have been provided to Indian Muslims going for Haj.
- Union Minister for Minority Affairs Shri Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi signed Bilateral annual Haj 2020 agreement between India and Saudi Arabia with Haj & Umrah Minister of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, His Excellency Dr. Mohammad Saleh bin Taher Benteen on 01st December, 2019 in Jeddah.
- For the first time facilities have been provided for digital pre-tagging of baggages of pilgrims. This will ensure the Indian pilgrims will get information in India itself about building along with the room allotted to the pilgrims and transportation like details of bus to be taken by the pilgrims after reaching to the airport in Saudi Arabia. Even SIM card has been linked to mobile app which will ensure Haj pilgrims immediately getting all the latest information regarding Haj in Makkah-Madina on their mobile phone.
- This year, a 100-line information centre has been established at Haj House, Mumbai for providing information regarding entire Haj process. While on one hand health card is being provided to Indian Haj pilgrims in the country, on the other hand “E-MASIHA” (E Medical Assistance System for Indian Pilgrims Abroad), an online system to create and maintain the complete health database of Indian pilgrims along with doctors’ prescriptions, medical treatment as well as medicine disbursements, has been developed to deal any emergency in Makkah- Madinah.

141. EChO Network

- EChO Network, a national program to provide a template for cross-disciplinary leadership in India with the specific focus of increasing research, knowledge, and awareness of Indian ecology and the environment was launched in December 2019.
- EChO Network would develop a national network to catalyse a new generation of Indians who can synthesize interdisciplinary concepts and tackle real-world problems in medicine, agriculture, ecology, and technology. With no precedent for such a network anywhere in the world, EChO Network establishes a new platform to change how science is embedded in our modern society.
- Through interactive sessions with citizens, industry, academia, and the government, the Network will identify gaps in knowledge regarding selected topics in human and environmental ecosystems.
- The program will then train postdoctoral leaders in research and outreach on these topics, while also incorporating current public and private efforts into a national network. It would then go on to establishing nation-wide awareness in these issues through public discourse and education for citizens, industry, and government.

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142. Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP)

- The Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP) has been recognised formally by the National Department of Regulation of Medicines and Health Products of the Ministry of Public Health of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. IP is an officially recognized book of standards as per the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and Rules 1945 thereunder.
- The IP specifies the standards of drugs manufactured and marketed in India in terms of their identity, purity and strength.
- The quality, efficacy and safety of the medicines are important from healthcare perspective. In order to ensure the quality of medicinal products, the legal and scientific standards are provided by Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC) in the form of Indian Pharmacopoeia (IP). As per, the Second Schedule of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, IP is designated as the official book of standards for drugs imported and/or manufactured for sale, stock or exhibition for sale or distribution in India.
- The IP Commission's mission is to promote public and animal health in India by bringing out authoritative and officially accepted standards for quality of drugs including active pharmaceutical ingredients, excipients and dosage forms, used by health professionals, patients and consumers. This is achieved by developing the standards for medicines and supporting their implementation.
- In addition, IPC also develops IP Reference Substances (IPRS) that act as fingerprint for identification of an article under test and its purity as prescribed in the IP monographs. Standards prescribed in the IP are authoritative in nature and are enforced by the regulatory authorities for quality control of medicines in India

143. First Chief of Defence Staff of India

- The government on 30th December 2019 appointed Indian Army Chief General Bipin Rawat as the first Chief of Defence Staff with a mandate to bring in convergence in functioning of the Army, the Navy and the Indian Air Force and bolster the country's military prowess.
- As CDS, General Rawat will be the topmost defence officer of the country and will be the single point of contact for the government. General Rawat will be able to serve as CDS for a period of up to three years after the government amended the rules extending the age of retirement to 65 years.

- The recommendation for CDS had first been made after the Kargil war by Kargil Review Committee. It was argued that this post will create better coordination between the three services -- the Army, the Navy and the Air Force. The Cabinet Committee on Security had, in a landmark decision December 24th 2019, approved the creation of the CDS who will act as the principal military adviser to the defence minister on all matters relating to tri-services.

History of position

- The idea of creation of such a post goes back to as early **Lord Mountbatten. General K. V. Krishna Rao** advanced creation of the post of Chief of Defence Staff in June 1982. However, officially, it was only following the Kargil Review Committee's recommendation in 1999 that the Group of Ministers (GoM) officially proposed the creation of the post of CDS in 2001. Following committees, including the Naresh Chandra task force in 2012 and the Lieutenant General D. B. Shekatkar Committee in 2016, also proposed their own versions of a CDS.

Position of CDS

- The position, a four-star general, a tri-service Chief, that shall lead the defence forces as well as take up other roles such as head of the Department of Military Affairs under the Ministry of Defence. It is considered that the Chief of Defence Staff is a critical position in today's era of hybrid warfare, and will help increase jointmanship, tri-service effectiveness and overall combat capabilities of India.
- The holder of the post would also be the head of all tri-service command structures, assisted by a deputy, the Vice Chief of the Defence Staff to replace the post of Chief of Integrated Defence Staff. The CDS would head a newly-created Department of Military Affairs (DMA), under the Ministry of Defence and will function as its Secretary. Apart from heading the DMA, the CDS will also be the Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee (PC-COSC). He will also be the Principal Adviser to the Minister of Defence.
- Furthermore, the position involves:
 - ✓ The Chief of Defence Staff is described by officials as the "first among equals" among service chiefs.
 - ✓ The CDS will be tasked with trimming weapons procurement procedures and integrating operations of the Indian armed forces-Army, Air Force and Navy.
 - ✓ The CDS will have the authority to direct the service chiefs of Army, Navy and Air Force and will also have the authority to create theatre commands as and when needed.
 - ✓ Command tri-service agencies/organisations/commands including those related to cyber and space.
 - ✓ CDS will be member of Defence Acquisition Council chaired by the Minister of Defence and Defence Planning Committee chaired by the National Security Advisor.
 - ✓ Function as the Military Advisor to the Nuclear Command Authority.
 - ✓ Implement Five-Year Defence Capital Acquisition Plan (DCAP), and Two-Year roll-on Annual Acquisition Plans (AAP), as a follow up of Integrated Capability Development Plan (ICDP).
- The CDS's salary and perquisites will be same as the Service Chiefs. The CDS will come under the Right to Information Act. The insignia of the CDS includes the Army's Sword, the IAF Eagle and the Navy Anchor.



144. Dissent Relevant To Democracy - Judiciary

- The Supreme Court, in a series of judgments, had recognised dissent as a “symbol of a vibrant democracy” and held that a country becomes a jail if citizens are made to move under the “scrutinising gaze” of the police. This opinion was upheld by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud observed in his dissenting opinion in 2018 on a petition filed by historian Romila Thapar against the arrest of five activists for alleged Maoist links in the aftermath of the Bhima-Koregaon violence.
- In another dissent, Justice K. Subba Rao in the 1962 Kharak Singh case said restrictions cannot be imposed on free speech and dissent on the basis of the “personal sensitiveness”. Justice Rao’s dissent was resurrected by a nine-judge Bench in the 2017 privacy judgment, which said “neither life nor liberty are bounties conferred by the State”.
- Again, in the Shreya Singhal judgment, Justice Rohinton Nariman said “protected and innocent speech” cannot be curtailed on vague grounds that it was “grossly offensive” or “causes annoyance or inconvenience”.

145. NITI Aayog’s SDG India Index

- In the latest edition of NITI Aayog’s annual assessment of progress made by states in achieving the sustainable development goals (SDG), Kerala retained the top slot, followed closely by Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. In the lower ranks, still, are Jharkhand, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Assam, and Uttar Pradesh, with Bihar at the bottom.
- The SDG Index 2019 measures the performance of states and Union territories on indicators such as poverty, hunger, gender equality, health, education, and clean water and sanitation, among others. While the 2018 index measured performance on 13 of the 17 SDG goals, the latest edition goes one step further, covering all 17 SDGs (a qualitative assessment has been made for measuring performance on partnerships).
- It has been constructed using 100 indicators, and covers 54 targets. At the aggregate level, India’s composite score has improved from 57 in 2018 to 60 in 2019, much of the improvement taking place due to progress on five goals — clean water and sanitation; affordable and clean energy; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; life on land, and peace, justice, and strong institutions. On all these indicators, India has scored between 65 and 99. This year marks the fifth anniversary of the adoption of SDGs. The 17 SDGs and 169 related targets are to be achieved by 2030.

146. December 27th And National Anthem

- On December 27, 1911, the National Anthem was first sung at the Calcutta session of the Congress. 'Jana Gana Mana' is the first stanza of the Bengali hymn 'Bharoto Bhagyo Bidhata', written by Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore.
- A slightly varied version of the song was adopted by Subhash Chandra Bose's Indian National Army in 1941 as the national anthem, called 'Shubh Sukh Chain', which also became popular in India since. On August 15, 1947, after India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru unfurled the Tricolour on the ramparts of the Red Fort and addressed the nation, Capt Thakuri of the INA, who had given music to the 'Subh Sukh Chain' version, was invited to play with members of his orchestra group.
- 'Jana Gana Mana' was adopted as the country's National Anthem by the Constituent Assembly of India on January 24, 1950, the last day of its last session. Dr Rajendra Prasad, the President of the Assembly, and later the President of India for two full terms, had on that day also declared 'Vande Mataram' as the National Song. Reverence to the National Anthem is a Fundamental duty in India. According to Article 51A (a) of the Constitution: "It shall be the duty of every citizen of India to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem".
- Tagore's compositions also went on to become the national anthem of Bangladesh. 'Amar Sonar Bangla', the Bangladeshi anthem, was written to protest against the partition of Bengal by the British in 1905. Sri Lanka's "Sri Lanka Matha", written by Ananda Samarakoon, was also influenced by Tagore. Some believe that Tagore wrote it in full.

147. Upgrade of BrahMos

- The **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)** carried out **two successful tests of the latest variant of the BrahMos missile**, one from the land platform and the other from air. BrahMos, developed through a collaboration between India and Russia, is one of the most advanced weapons in India's armoury.
- **BrahMos is a cruise missile**, meaning it can be guided towards a pre-determined land- or sea-based target. With a capability to attain speeds 2.8 times that of sound (Mach 2.8), BrahMos is classified as supersonic cruise missile. A newer version under development is aimed at flying at speeds greater than Mach 5. These are called hypersonic cruise missiles. Besides decreasing the reaction time of the enemy, higher speeds also substantially reduce the chances of the missile getting intercepted.
- An amalgam of the **names of the rivers Brahmaputra and Moskva**, BrahMos is being produced by BrahMos Aerospace, a joint venture company set up by DRDO and Mashinostroyeniya of Russia in 1998. The first version of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile was inducted into the Indian Navy in 2005, meant to be fired from INS Rajput.
- While the missile has been in India's arsenal for long, it is continuously upgraded and updated with new hardware and software. BrahMos has undergone development through the early 2000s till date. Its land-to-land, submarine-fired and now air-fired variants have been developed stage by stage. Each new version has something additional compared to the previous version.
- The BrahMos Air-Launched Cruise Missile (ALCM), as it has since been called, has been a significant addition in IAF's air combat capability from stand-off ranges. Stand-off range missiles are ones that

are launched at a distance sufficient to allow an attacking party to evade defensive fire expected from the target area. Officials said that stand-off range missiles, of which cruise missiles are a type, have been in the arsenal of all the major powers of the world.

148. Good Governance Index

- Recently Minister of State for Personnel Jitendra Singh launched the **Good Governance Index (GGI)**. **December 25, the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee**, was declared Good Governance Day by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014. According to a press release issued by the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, GGI is a uniform tool that will help in assessing the status of governance and the impact of interventions undertaken by governments across all states and UTs.
- GGI will **consider 10 sectors**: agriculture and allied sectors, commerce and industries, human resource development, public health, public infrastructure and utilities, economic governance, social welfare and development, judicial & public security, environment, and citizen-centric governance. These sectors will be assessed on the basis of over 50 indicators, which have been assigned different weights. Scores will be summed up to reach composite scores.
- States and Union Territories are ranked separately. The states and UTs have been grouped into three categories: big states, Northeast and hill categories, and UTs. On the index, Tamil Nadu has got the highest score (5.62), followed by Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Chhattisgarh (5.4, 5.1, and 5.05) respectively. Among the Northeastern and hill states, Himachal Pradesh is at the top with a score of 5.22, followed by Uttarakhand, Tripura, and Mizoram at 4.87, 4.5, and 4.41 respectively.
- In the list of environment rankings, West Bengal is on top, followed by Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Bihar. In economic governance ranking, Karnataka leads, followed by Maharashtra, Telangana, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu.

149. Supreme Court and Divorce In Hindu Marriage

- Recently the Supreme Court used extraordinary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution to grant divorce in a case of “irretrievable breakdown of marriage”. Currently, Hindu marriage law does not include “irretrievable breakdown of marriage” as a ground for divorce. However, the apex court in a number of cases has provided the said relief using its extraordinary powers that allow it to do “complete justice”.
- The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955, lays down the law for divorce, which applies to Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Sikhs. Under Section 13 of the Act, the grounds for divorce include: “voluntary sexual intercourse with any person other than his or her spouse”; “cruelty”; desertion “for a continuous period of not less than two years immediately preceding the presentation of the petition”; “ceas(ing) to be a Hindu by conversion to another religion”; and being “incurably of unsound mind”.
- In addition, Section 13B provides for “divorce by mutual consent”. Section 27 of The Special Marriage Act, 1954 provides the grounds for grant of divorce in the case of marriages solemnised under that Act. However, neither of the two Acts provide for “irretrievable breakdown of marriage” as a ground for divorce.

- Article 142, the court said, provide(s) a unique power to the Supreme Court, to do “complete justice” between the parties, i.e., where at times law or statute may not provide a remedy, the Court can extend itself to put a quietus to a dispute in a manner which would befit the facts of the case.
- The Law Commission of India has twice recommended that “irretrievable breakdown” of marriage be included as a new ground for granting divorce to Hindus under the provisions of the Hindu Marriage Act and the Special Marriage Act. The Commission first suggested an amendment in 1978 in its 71st report, and in 2009 in the 217th report.
- Under Article 142(1), “The Supreme Court in the exercise of its jurisdiction may pass such decree or make such order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it, and any decree so passed or order so made shall be enforceable throughout the territory of India in such manner as may be prescribed by or under any law made by Parliament and, until provision in that behalf is so made, in such manner as the President may by order prescribe”

150. Curative Petition

- Three of the four convicts in the Nirbhaya case filed a review petition against the verdict which was rejected by the Supreme Court. This year, the four convicts filed a mercy petition which was rejected by the President of India. In this scenario, the counsel of the convicts is left with only one option – to file a curative petition in the top court.

What is Curative Petition?

- A curative petition may be filed after a review plea against the final conviction is dismissed. It is meant to ensure there is no miscarriage of justice, and to prevent abuse of process. A curative petition is usually decided by judges in chamber, unless a specific request for an open-court hearing is allowed. While Review petition is provided for Article 137 of the Indian Constitution, Curative petition was started after the decision of Supreme Court Rupa Ashok Hurra v/s Ashok Hurra case.
- Every curative petition is decided on the basis of principles laid down by the Supreme Court in Rupa Ashok Hurra Vs Ashok Hurra & another, 2002. The court ruled that a curative petition can be entertained if the petitioner establishes there was a violation of the principles of natural justice, and that he was not heard by the court before passing an order. It will also be admitted where a judge failed to disclose facts that raise the apprehension of bias.

Rarity

- The SC has held that curative petitions must be rare rather than regular, and be entertained with circumspection. A curative petition must be accompanied by certification by a senior advocate, pointing out substantial grounds for entertaining it. It must be first circulated to a bench of the three senior-most judges, and the judges who passed the concerned judgment, if available. Only when a majority of the judges conclude that the matter needs hearing should it be listed – as far as possible, before the same Bench.
- It shall be open to the Bench at any stage of consideration of the curative petition to ask a senior counsel to assist it as amicus curiae. In the event of the Bench holding at any stage that the petition is without any merit and vexatious, it may impose exemplary costs on the petitioner.

151. Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme (EQUIP)

- In accordance with the decision of the Prime Minister for finalizing a five-year vision plan for each Ministry, the Department of Higher Education of HRD Ministry has finalized and released a five-year Vision plan named Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme (EQUIP). This report has been prepared after a detailed exercise done by the Experts.
- Sets out to deliver further on principles of Access, Inclusion, Quality, Excellence and enhancing employability in Higher Education.
- EQUIP is a vision plan aiming at ushering transformation in India's higher education system by implementing strategic interventions in the sector over five years (2019-2024).
- EQUIP has been prepared based on reports of Ten expert groups constituted to deliberate upon important aspects of Higher Education.
- Currently EQUIP has been submitted for in principal approval of EFC.

152. Swayam 2.0

- Launch of SWAYAM 2.0 with enhanced features and facilities.
- To offer Online Degree Programmes through SWAYAM by Top Ranking Universities

Key Features of SWAYAM 2.0

- Higher Scalability and Performance
- Enhanced features for faculty and students
- Improved assessment and evaluation
- Internationalisation
- Translation to Indian languages
- Local chapters and mentors
- Offering of On-line Degrees

SWAYAM 1.0 was Launched on 9th July 2017 by the President of India with the Objectives of Equal access to Quality education, Increase GER in Higher Education from 26 to 30 in next 5 years and Anyone, Anywhere, Anytime learning

In SWAYAM platform

- 2800+ courses offered
- 1.23 Crore students enrolled in the courses
- Examinations conducted across 125 cities across India
- Over 5 lakh students obtained certificates

Swayam Prabha- DTH Educational Channels:

- Project for telecasting high quality educational programs through 32 DTH channels on 24x7 basis to reach out to student/learners of India with wide reach and minimal cost.
- It aims to support those students who do not have good learning options like lack of teacher or internet etc. It also aims to provide dedicated channels 'IITPAL' to assist the students of 11 and 12
- standards aspiring to join premier educational institutions in the country.
- SWAYAM Prabha project is managed by Chief Coordinator from IIT Madras.
- All 32 channels are telecasting high quality curriculum mapped educational contents on 24x7 basis.
- Every day, there will be new content for at least (4) hours which would be repeated 5 more times in a day.
- All telecasted videos are available on YouTube as archival.
- Total telecasted videos are around 60,000.
- On YouTube there are 4,12,403 subscribers and 2,05,70,482 views.

153. Ujala & Street Lighting National Programme

- Launched by Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi on January 5th, 2015, the Government of India's zero subsidy Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA) and LED Street Lighting National Programme (SLNP), marked its fifth anniversary today.
- SLNP is the world's largest streetlight replacement programme and UJALA is the world's largest domestic lighting project. Both have been spearheaded and implemented by Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL), a joint venture of PSUs under the Ministry of Power, Government of India.
- Under the UJALA scheme, 20W LED tube lights and BEE 5-star rated energy efficient fans are also distributed to the consumers. The 20W LED tube lights are 50% more energy efficient than conventional 40W tube lights and are available for Rs. 220/- per tube, as against the market price of Rs. 400-600.
- The energy efficient fans under the UJALA scheme come with a BEE 5 Star rating. These ceiling fans are rated 30% more energy efficient than conventional fans and are priced at Rs. 1200/- per fan.
- The Electricity Distribution Company and Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) a public sector body of Government of India are implementing the programme. Every grid-connected consumer having a metered connection from their respective Electricity Distribution Company can get the LED bulbs at about 40% of the market price under the UJALA Scheme.
- Consumers also have the option of paying for the LEDs in equated monthly installments. Through the UJALA scheme consumers can avail from a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 10 LED bulbs, depending on the region. Studies indicate that a domestic household on an average has 5-6 lighting points.
- Street Light National Programme is an initiative of the Government to promote energy efficiency in the country. Government aims to replace 3.5 crore conventional street lights with energy efficient LED lights. This would result in annual energy saving of 900 crore units and the total cost savings of municipalities every year will be Rs 5,500 crore.

- Energy Efficiency Services Limited, a Public Energy Services Company under the administration of Ministry of Power, Government of India (GoI) is the implementing agency for SLNP. The National Programme was launched on 5th January 2015 to convert conventional street and domestic lights with energy efficient LED lights.

154. Changes to the Railway Board

- The Cabinet recently approved trimming of the **Railway Board, the powerful body that governs the Indian Railways. From nine, the Board will now have only five Members.**
- The Cabinet also decided to merge all central service cadres of Railways officers into a single Indian Railways Management Service (IRMS). Now, any eligible officer could occupy any post, including Board Member posts, irrespective of training and specialisation, since they will all belong to IRMS.
- The five members of the Board, other than a Chairman-cum-CEO, will now be the Members Infrastructure, Finance, Rolling Stock, Track, and Operations and Business Development. The Board will also have independent Members, who will be industry experts with at least 30 years of experience, but in non-executive roles, only attending Board meetings.

Present system

- The Indian Railways is governed by a pool of officers, among whom engineers are recruited after the Indian Engineering Service Examination, and civil servants through the Civil Services Examination. The civil servants are in the Indian Railway Traffic Service (IRTS), Indian Railway Accounts Service (IRAS) and Indian Railway Personnel Service (IRPS).
- The engineers are in five technical service cadres — Indian Railway Service of Engineers (IRSE), Indian Railway Service of Mechanical Engineers (IRSME), Indian Railway Service of Electrical Engineers (IRSEE), Indian Railway Service of Signal Engineers (IRSSE) and the Indian Railway Stores Service (IRSS).
- Until the 1950s, the Railways system was run by officers from just three main streams: Traffic, Civil Engineering, and Mechanical. The other streams emerged as separate services over time
- Several committees including the **Bibek Debroy committee in 2015 have noted that “departmentalism” is a major problem in the system.** Most committees have said merger of the services in some form would be a solution. The Debroy report recommended merging of all services to create two distinct services: Technical and Logistics. But it did not say how to merge the existing officers.
- A separate exam under the Union Public Service Commission is proposed to be instituted in 2021 to induct IRMS officers.

155. Article 131 of the Constitution

On 14th January, the Kerala government moved the Supreme Court against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act and filed a petition under Article 131 of the Indian Constitution. The petition has asked for the law to be declared unconstitutional and in violation of Articles 14 (equality before law), 21 (protection of life and personal liberty) and 25 (freedom of conscience and free profession, practice, and propagation of religion).

What is Article 131?

- Article 131 reads, **Original jurisdiction of the Supreme Court**. Subject to the provisions of this Constitution, the Supreme Court shall, to the exclusion of any other court, have original jurisdiction in any dispute —
 - ✓between the Government of India and one or more States; or
 - ✓between the Government of India and any State or States on one side and one or more other States on the other; or
 - ✓between two or more States,
 if and in so far as the dispute involves any question (whether of law or fact) on which the existence or extent of a legal right depends
- Unlike the original jurisdiction under Article 32 (which gives the top court the power to issue writs, etc.), the jurisdiction in Article 131 is exclusive, meaning it is only the Supreme Court which has this authority. Under Article 226, the High Courts too have the power to issue writs, directions etc.
- Provided that the said jurisdiction shall not extend to a dispute arising out of any treaty, agreement, covenant, engagement, or other similar instrument which, having been entered into or executed before the commencement of this Constitution, continues in operation after such commencement, or which provides, that the said jurisdiction shall not extend to such a dispute.

156. Classical Languages in India

- At the recently concluded 93rd edition of the Akhil Bharatiya Marathi Sahitya Sammelan, a resolution was passed demanding the declaration of Marathi as a „Classical“ language.
- The Sammelan, an annual conference of Marathi writers, was started in 1878, and over the years has been headed by leading Marathi intellectuals, including Justice Mahadev Govind Ranade, Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad III of Baroda, and Prahlad Keshav “Acharya” Atre.
- This year’s conference was presided over by environmentalist, and Catholic priest Francis D’Britto, the first Christian to do so in history.

How is a language declared to be classical?

Currently, six languages enjoy the **Classical” status**: Tamil (declared in 2004), Sanskrit (2005), Kannada (2008), Telugu (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Odia (2014). According to information provided by the Ministry of Culture in the Rajya Sabha in February 2014, the guidelines for declaring a language as “Classical” are:

- High antiquity of its early texts/recorded history over a period of 1500-2000 years;
- A body of ancient literature/texts, which is considered a valuable heritage by generations of speakers;
- The literary tradition be original and not borrowed from another speech community;
- The classical language and literature being distinct from modern, there may also be a discontinuity between the classical language and its later forms or its offshoots.”

Benefits of being a Classical Language

According to MHRD the benefits of a language being notified as a Classical Language include:

1. Two major annual international awards for scholars of eminence in classical Indian languages
 2. A Centre of Excellence for studies in Classical Languages is set up
 3. The University Grants Commission is requested to create, to start with at least in the Central Universities, a certain number of Professional Chairs for the Classical Languages so declared.”
- The Ministry of Culture has listed the institutions that have been dedicated to Classical languages. Sanskrit: Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi;
 - Maharishi Sandipani Rashtriya Ved Vidya Pratishthan, Ujjain; Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha, Tirupati and Sri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, New Delhi Telugu and Kannada:
 - Centres of Excellence for Studies in the respective languages at the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) established by the HRD Ministry in 2011. Tamil:
 - Central Institute of Classical Tamil (CICT), Chennai The University Grant Commission (UGC) also awards research projects for promoting these languages.

157. National Policy for Rare Diseases

- The **Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** recently published a **national policy for the treatment of 450 “rare diseases”**. Among other measures, the policy intends to kickstart a National Registry of Rare Diseases, which will be maintained by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR).
- Ministry of Health and family Welfare, Government of India formulated a National Policy for Treatment of Rare Diseases (NPTRD) in July, 2017. Implementation of the policy was, however, faced with certain challenges. An Expert Committee was constituted by Ministry of Health and Family Welfare under the chairmanship of Director General of Health Services in November, 2018 to review the NPTRD, 2017.
- The revised policy mentions some measures, which include creating a patient registry for rare diseases, arriving at a definition for rare diseases that is suited to India, taking legal and other measures to control the prices of their drugs and developing standardised protocols for diagnosis and management of the treatment.
- Under the policy, there are three categories of rare diseases requiring one-time curative treatment, diseases that require long-term treatment but where the cost is low, and those needing long-term treatments with high cost. Some of the diseases in the first category include osteopetrosis and immune deficiency disorders, among others.
- As per the policy, the assistance of Rs 15 lakh will be provided to patients suffering from rare diseases that require a one-time curative treatment under the Rashtriya Arogya Nidhi scheme. The treatment will be limited to the beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana.

What are rare diseases?

- WHO defines rare disease as often debilitating lifelong disease or disorder condition with a prevalence of 1 or less, per 1000 population. However, different countries have their own definitions to suit their specific requirements.
- India does not have a definition of rare diseases because there is a lack of epidemiological data on their incidence and prevalence. According to the policy, rare diseases include genetic diseases, rare cancers, infectious tropical diseases, and degenerative diseases. As per the policy, out of all rare diseases in the world, less than five per cent have therapies available to treat them.
- So far only about 450 diseases have been recorded in India from tertiary care hospitals that are globally considered as rare diseases. The most commonly reported diseases include Haemophilia, Thalassemia, Sickle-cell Anaemia and Primary Immuno Deficiency in children, auto-immune diseases, Lysosomal storage disorders such as Pompe disease, Hirschsprung disease, Gaucher's disease, Cystic Fibrosis, Hemangiomas and certain forms of muscular dystrophies.

Need for Policy?

- The policy was created on the direction of the Delhi High Court to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. This was in response to writ petitions for free treatment of such diseases, due to their "prohibitively" high cost of treatment.
- According to 2017 Rare Diseases Impact Report, over 50 per cent of new cases are reported in children and these diseases are responsible for 35 per cent of deaths in those below the age of one, 10 per cent of deaths between the ages of one and five, and 12 per cent between five and 15.

158. Police Commissionerate System

The Uttar Pradesh Cabinet recently approved the commissionerate system of policing for state capital Lucknow, and Noida. The system gives more responsibilities, including magisterial powers, to IPS officers of Inspector General of Police (IG) rank posted as commissioners.

What is this system?

- Under the **7th Schedule of the Constitution, Police is under the State list**, meaning individual states typically legislate and exercise control over this subject. In the arrangement in force at the district level, a '**dual system**' of control exists, in which the Superintendent of Police (SP) has to work with the District Magistrate (DM) for supervising police administration.
- At the metropolitan level, many states have replaced the dual system with the commissionerate system, as it is supposed to allow for faster decision-making to solve complex urban-centric issues. In the commissionerate system, the Commissioner of Police (CP) is the head of a unified police command structure, is responsible for the force in the city, and is accountable to the state government. The office also has magisterial powers, including those related to regulation, control, and licensing.
- The CP is drawn from the Deputy Inspector General rank or above, and is assisted by Special/Joint/Additional/Deputy Commissioners. Almost all states barring Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, UT of J&K, and some Northeastern states have a commissionerate system.

History and need for the System?

- Policing is based on the Police Act of 1861. Under the colonial system, the overall in-charge of a district or region was the district collector; the SP reported to him. The powers of the executive magistrate, such as issuing orders for preventive arrests or imposition of Section 144 CrPC, were vested in the district collector. This was called the dual system of police administration.
- The British brought the system first in Kolkata and followed it in Mumbai and Chennai presidencies. Delhi turned into a commissionerate during the Morarji Desai regime. In 1978, an initiative to introduce the system in UP, beginning with Kanpur, never materialised. Under the commissionerate system, the commissioner does not report to the DM. In Mumbai and Delhi, he reports directly to the government. The supporters of system believe that it gives an integrated command structure. It helps fix responsibility with the Commissioner and eliminates blame game between civil administration and police when something goes wrong.

159. Census and cities in India

- There was a lot of confusion regarding an Economist report that put Malappuram at the top of the “Top ten fastest-growing cities” in the world, based on “Total % change, 2015-20 forecast” through data from the United Nations Population Division.
- The UN list refers to “urban agglomerations” (UA), which are extended areas built around an existing town along with its outgrowths typically villages or other residential areas or universities, ports, etc., on the outskirts of the town.

Definition as per the Census:

- The Census defines a **UA** as “**a continuous urban spread consisting of a town and its adjoining urban outgrowths or two or more physically contiguous towns together**”. The National Capital Territory of Delhi is a UA that includes the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) areas, as well as 107 “Census towns” erstwhile surrounding villages where more than 75% of the population is now engaged in non-agricultural pursuits.
- According to the Census definition, an urban area is either a census town (CT) or a statutory town (ST). An ST is any place with a municipal corporation, municipal council, or cantonment board.
- ACT can be a village with “urban characteristics” a population more than 5,000, population density more than 400 people per sq. km, and with more than 75% of the population not engaged in agriculture for their livelihood. When a village becomes a CT, its population is included in the urban population of the district.

160. NCRB Reports 2018- Crime in India and ADSI

- The National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) released Crime in India data showing decline in crime rate, which has shown a marked improvement after 2015. The crime rate was over 540 in 2013, which increased to 581 in 2014 and almost 582 in 2015. The crime rate then suddenly dropped - by about 35 per cent—to 379.3 in 2016 increasing to 388.6 in 2017 and dipping again in 2018 to 383.5.
- The cause for the same is being seen in the new methodology adopted by the National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB). It is called the Principal Offence Rule (POR), which the home ministry-controlled bureau adopted for classifying crime data of 2016.

- According to the Principal Offence Rule, each criminal incident is recorded as one crime. If many offences are registered in a single FIR case, only the most heinous crime - one that attracts maximum punishment will be considered as counting unit.
- For example, if there is an incident involving abduction, wrongful confinement, rape or gangrape and murder, it will be listed in the NCRB data as murder. All these are separate crimes under the Indian Penal Code (IPC) but while gangrape attracts maximum punishment of life imprisonment, murder can lead to death sentence to the culprit.
- This principal is followed in many developed countries, including 18 of the European Union. But then 21 others in the EU don't follow this rule for crime data collection. While the rate may have dipped, actual number of crimes has increased by 1.3 per cent, in 2018 compared to 2017. In spite of all campaigns of Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, the crime rate per lakh women increased to 58.8 in 2018 in comparison with 57.9 in 2017. And, the crime rate per lakh children population was 31.8 in 2018 in comparison with 28.9 in 2017.

Issue of Manual Scavenging

- The "Crime in India" reports released by National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for 2017 and 2018 continue to fail in providing data on cases filed under the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation (PEMSR) Act of 2013.
- A separate column listing the number of cases filed for offences related to manual scavenging was available under the Special and Local Laws (SLL) section until 2015. In 2016, the NCRB said that it was clubbing data on manual scavenging and 10 more SLLs under the „Other SLL Cases" column since only "very few cases" are reported under these Acts.
- In a reply to the Lok Sabha on December 3, 2019, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment said that 282 deaths while cleaning sewers were reported in the country from 2016 till the first week of November 2019 as per data available with National Commission for Safai Karamcharis.

Issue of Suicides

- Data from the Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India (ADSI) report of National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) shows that daily wage workers, those earning less than Rs 1 lakh per annum but educated up to the secondary level have the highest share in number of suicides in India in 2018.
- Suicides of persons engaged in the farming sector have come down for the third consecutive year, the report shows. 10349 persons engaged in farming committed suicide in 2018, out of which 5763 were cultivators and 4586, agricultural labourers.
- Maharashtra and Karnataka alone account for more than half of total suicides in the farming sector in the country. Among major states Bihar, Odisha and West Bengal have reported zero farmer suicides, which points towards a tendency to under-report or mis-classify statistics relating to farmers' suicides.
- The 2018 report does not give a reason-wise breakup for farmers suicides, a section missing from the NCRB's reports since 2016. This means that the role of economic distress cannot be ascertained in farmers' suicides.

Prison Statistics

- Since 2016, Indian prisons have increased their capacity but this has not kept pace with the growth in the number of prisoners, National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) data show. The capacity of prisons has increased from 3,80,876 in 2016 to 3,96,223 in 2018 (as of December 31), or by 4.03% during 2016-2018, according to the newly released report NCRB Prison Statistics India 2018. Over the same period, the number of prisoners lodged in these jails has increased from 4,33,003 to 4,66,084, or by 7.64%.
- Nearly 2,000 children were living in jails in India along with their imprisoned mothers, as of December 31, 2018. Out of 1,999 children (1,732 women prisoners), Uttar Pradesh accounted for one-fourth. Of the 4,66,084 prisoners as of December 31, 2018, 1,39,488 (30%) were convicts and over 69% (3,23,537) were undertrials. Less than 1% comprised detainees and other inmates.

What is NCRB?

NCRB under the Ministry of Home Affairs was set-up in 1986 to function as a repository of information on crime and criminals so as to assist the investigators in linking crime to the perpetrators, based on the recommendations of the National Police Commission (1977-1981) and the MHA's Task force (1985). NCRB brings out three annual reports i.e. Crime in India, Accidental Deaths & Suicides in India and Prison Statistics India. These reports are principal reference points for police officers, researchers, media & policy makers.

161. Bru-Reang Agreement

History

- The Bru or Reang are a community indigenous to Northeast India, living mostly in Tripura, Mizoram, and Assam. In Tripura, they are recognised as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG). Over two decades ago, they were targeted by the Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizo Zirwlai Pawl (MZP), and a few ethnic social organisations of Mizoram who demanded that the Bru be excluded from electoral rolls in the state.
- In October 1997, following ethnic clashes, nearly 37,000 Bru fled Mizoram's Mamit, Kolasib, and Lunglei districts to Tripura, where they were sheltered in relief camps. Since then, over 5,000 have returned to Mizoram in nine phases of repatriation, while 32,000 people from 5,400 families still live in six relief camps in North Tripura. Apart from their own Kaubru tongue, the Bru speak both Kokborok and Bangla, the two most widely spoken languages of the tribal and non-tribal communities of Tripura, and have an easy connection with the state.
- In June 2018, Bru leaders signed an agreement in Delhi with the Centre and the two state governments, providing for repatriation to Mizoram. Most residents of the camps, however, rejected the "insufficient" terms of the agreement. Only 328 families returned to Mizoram, rendering the process redundant.
- On November 16, 2019, Pradyot Kishore Debbarma, scion of Tripura's erstwhile royal family, wrote to Home Minister Amit Shah seeking the resettlement of the Bru in the state. The Bru were originally from Tripura, and had migrated to Mizoram after their homes were flooded due to the commissioning of the Dumbor hydroelectric power project in South Tripura in 1976, he claimed.

Bru-Reang Agreement on 16th Jan 2020

- All Bru currently living in temporary relief camps in Tripura will be settled in the state, if they want to stay on. The Bru who returned to Mizoram in the eight phases of repatriation since 2009, cannot, however, come back to Tripura.
- To ascertain the numbers of those who will be settled, a fresh survey and physical verification of Bru families living in relief camps will be carried out. The Centre will implement a special development project for the resettled Bru; this will be in addition to the Rs 600 crore fund announced for the process, including benefits for the migrants.
- Each resettled family will get 0.03 acre (1.5 ganda) of land for building a home, Rs 1.5 lakh as housing assistance, and Rs 4 lakh as a one-time cash benefit for sustenance. They will also receive a monthly allowance of Rs 5,000, and free rations for two years from the date of resettlement.
- All cash assistance will be through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), and the state government will expedite the opening of bank accounts and the issuance of Aadhaar, permanent residence certificates, ST Certificates, and voter identity cards to the beneficiaries.

Physical verification to identify beneficiaries will be carried out within 15 days of the signing of the deal. The land for resettlement will be identified within 60 days, and the land for allotment will be identified within 150 days.

The beneficiaries will get housing assistance, but the state government will build their homes and hand over possession. They will be moved to resettlement locations in four clusters, paving the way for the closure of the temporary camps within 180 days of the signing of the agreement. All dwelling houses will be constructed and payments completed within 270 days.

162. What is NSA?

Lieutenant Governor of Delhi Anil Baijal issued an order giving the Police Commissioner the power to detain individuals under the tough National Security Act (NSA), 1980. A notification to this effect was issued on January 10, and the order came into effect on January 19.

Historical Background

The Defense of India Act of 1915 was amended at the time of the First World War to enable the state to detain a citizen preventively. The Rowlatt Committee, approved after the First World War, recommended that the harsh and repressive provisions of the Defense of India Act be retained permanently on the statute books.

- The Government of India Act, 1935 gave the powers of preventive detention to the State for reasons connected with defense, external affairs or discharge of functions of the Crown in its relations with the Indian States. The provincial legislatures had the power to formulate laws for reasons connected with the Maintenance of Public Order.
- When the Constitution of India was enacted, Article 21 guaranteed to every person the right of life and liberty which could not be denied to him without honoring the due procedure established by law. In A.K. Gopalan's case the Supreme Court distinguished "the procedure established by law" from the "due process of law" saying that any procedure duly enacted would be a "procedure established by

law". However, this view now stands reversed in Maneka Gandhi's case where the Supreme Court has held that the "procedure established by law" must also be just, fair and reasonable.

- Article 22 of the Constitution laid down the scheme under which a preventive detention law could be enacted. The PD Act 1950 was enacted and it continued to be on the statute book until the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) was enacted in 1971. The MISA was repealed in 1977.

The National Security Act, 1980

- The NSA, which was passed by Parliament after Indira Gandhi returned to power in 1980, received the assent of President Neelam Sanjiva Reddy on December 27, 1980, and was notified in the official gazette. The NSA was described as "an Act to provide for preventive detention in certain cases and for matters connected therewith". The Act repealed the National Security Ordinance, 1980.
- As per the National Security Act, the grounds for preventive detention of a person include:
 - ✓ Acting in any manner prejudicial to the defence of India, the relations of India with foreign powers, or the security of India.
 - ✓ Regulating the continued presence of any foreigner in India or with a view to making arrangements for his expulsion from India.
 - ✓ preventing them from acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of the State or from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of public order or from acting in any manner prejudicial to the maintenance of supplies and services essential to the community it is necessary so to do.
- A person detained under the National Security Act can be held for 10 days without being told the charges against them. The detained person can appeal before a high court advisory board but they are not allowed a lawyer during the trial.
- The maximum period of detention is 12 months. The order can also be made by the District Magistrate or a Commissioner of Police under their respective jurisdictions, but the detention should be reported to the State Government along with the grounds on which the order has been made. No such order shall remain in force for more than twelve days unless approved by the State Government.
- The Act has been widely criticised as being "draconian" because of the powers of preventive detention that it gives to the government. The detention under the NSA can extend up to 12 months – or even for longer if the government is able to produce more evidence against the detainee

163. National Investigation Agency and 2019 Amendment

The NIA Act was enacted in the aftermath of the Mumbai terrorist attacks of 2008. A decade later, the Act was amended with the objective of speedy investigation and prosecution of certain offences, including those committed outside India. The National Investigation Agency (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was passed by Lok Sabha on July 15, 2019, and by Rajya Sabha on July 17, 2019.

The 2019 amendment in the law focussed on three main areas.

Offences Outside India:

- The original Act allowed NIA to investigate and prosecute offences within India. The amended Act empowered the agency to investigate offences committed outside India, subject to international treaties and domestic laws of other countries.

- The amended section reads: “Where the Central Government is of the opinion that a Scheduled Offence has been committed at any place outside India to which this Act extends, it may direct the Agency to register the case and take up investigation as if such offence has been committed in India.” The NIA special court in New Delhi will have jurisdiction over these cases.

Widened Scope Of Law:

- The NIA can investigate and prosecute offences under the Acts specified in the Schedule of the NIA Act. The Schedule originally had The Atomic Energy Act, 1962, The Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, and The Anti-Hijacking Act, 1982, among other entries. The amendment has allowed the NIA to investigate, in addition, cases related to
 - ✓ Human trafficking,
 - ✓ Counterfeit currency or banknotes,
 - ✓ Manufacture or sale of prohibited arms,
 - ✓ cyber-terrorism, and
 - ✓ Offences under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908.

Special Courts:

- The 2008 Act constituted Special Courts for conducting the trial of offences under the Act. The 2019 amendment allowed the central government to designate Sessions Courts as Special Courts for the trial of scheduled offences under the Act.
- The central government is required to consult the Chief Justice of the High Court under which the Sessions Court is functioning, before designating it as a Special Court. When more than one Special Court has been designated for any area, the seniormost judge will distribute cases among the courts. State governments too, may also designate Sessions Courts as Special Courts for the trial of scheduled offences.

164. Time to Care: Unpaid and Underpaid Care Work and the Global Inequality Crisis

- The report, titled Time to Care: Unpaid and Underpaid Care Work and the Global Inequality Crisis, released ahead of the 50th Annual Meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) by Oxfam, underlines that India’s richest 1% hold more than four times the wealth held by the 953 million who make up for the bottom 70% of the country’s population.
- The report claimed the wealth inequality that is the “great divide is based on a flawed and sexist economic system” which has “accumulated vast wealth and power into the hands of a rich few, in part by exploiting the labour of women and girls, and systematically violating their rights”.

Observations

- 2,153 individuals, the number of billionaires in the world in 2019, have more wealth among them than 4.6 billion people.
- 22 of the world’s richest men have a combined wealth that is more than the wealth of all the women of Africa.

- The world's richest 1% have more than twice as much wealth as 6.9 billion people
- Globally, extreme poverty rates are 4% higher for women than men; this gap rises to 22% during women's peak productive and reproductive ages; that is, 122 women aged 25-34 for every 100 men of the same age group live in extremely poor households, largely due to childcare responsibilities.
- Women do 12.5 billion hours of unpaid care work every day, equivalent to 1.5 billion people working 8 hours a day with no remuneration.
- Globally, 42% of working age women are outside the paid labour force, compared with 6% of men, due to unpaid care responsibilities.

165. Global Social Mobility Report

- The World Economic Forum, which organises the well-known annual gathering of the world's most influential business and political decision-makers in the ski-resort of Davos (Switzerland), has come out with its first-ever Global Social Mobility Report, which has ranked India a lowly 72 out of the 82 countries profiled.
- According to the report, the Nordic economies such as Denmark and Finland top the social mobility rankings while countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and South Africa languish at the bottom.

What is Social Mobility?

The concept of social mobility is much broader than just looking at income inequality. It encompasses several concerns such as:

- Intragenerational mobility: The ability for an individual to move between socio-economic classes within their own lifetime.
- Intergenerational mobility: The ability for a family group to move up or down the socio-economic ladder across the span of one or more generations.
- Absolute income mobility: The ability for an individual to earn, in real terms, as much as or more than their parents at the same age.
- Absolute educational mobility: The ability for an individual to attain higher education levels than their parents.
- Relative income mobility: How much of an individual's income is determined by their parents' income.
- Relative educational mobility: How much of an individual's educational attainment is determined by their parents' educational attainment.

Research has shown that in high-income countries, since the 1990s, there is stagnation at both the bottom and the top end of the income distribution—a phenomenon which social mobility experts describe as 'sticky floors' and 'sticky ceilings'. In other words, how far an individual can move up in the society determines a lot whether one is closer to the income "floor" (or poor) or "ceiling" (or rich).

Calculation

The WEF's Global Social Mobility Index assesses the 82 economies on "10 pillars" spread across the following five key dimensions of social mobility:

- Health;
- Education (access, quality and equity, lifelong learning);
- Technology;
- Work (opportunities, wages, conditions);

Protection and Institutions (social protection and inclusive institutions). India's performance on individual parameters:

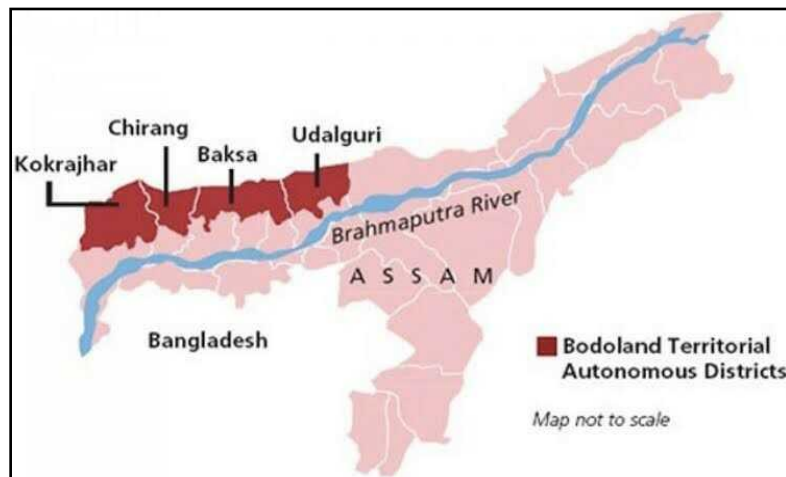
Parameter	Rank (out of 82 countries)
Health	73
Access to Education	66
Quality and Equity in Education	77
Lifelong learning	41
Access to Technology	73
Work Opportunities	75
Fair Wage Distribution	79
Working Conditions	53
Social Protection	76
Inclusive Institutions	67

166. Relevance of 26th January

- 26 January 1950 was the day India's Constitution came into effect, and the country became a republic. The day- 26 January- was chosen for a particular reason, as it marked a key event in the struggle for India's freedom from British rule.
- In 1929, Lahore hosted the Indian National Congress session, in which Jawaharlal Nehru was president. At the time, Nehru and Subhash Chandra Bose were together working to oppose those in the Congress party who were satisfied with 'dominion status', wherein the British monarch would continue to be the head of government.
- On December 31, 1929, Nehru hoisted the tricolour on the banks of the Ravi river and demanded "**Poorna Swaraj**" or **complete self-rule**, and the date set for independence was January 26, 1930. The day was then celebrated as Poorna Swaraj day for the next 17 years. On January 26, 1930, the Congress passed the Poorna Swaraj resolution or the Declaration of Independence.

167. Bodo Accord

- Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal signed a peace accord on January 27th in the presence of Home Minister Amit Shah, with all factions of the Bodo militant group National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) and All Bodo Students' Union (ABSU), paving the way for political and economic benefits for the Bodo community. However, the Bodo outfits' demand for a separate Bodoland state or territorial change in terms of a new union territory was not included in the accord.
- In November 2019, the Home Ministry has declared the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) along with all its groups, factions, and front organisations as an "unlawful association" under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.



Third Bodo Accord

- In 1966-67, the demand for a separate state called Bodoland was raised under the banner of the Plains Tribals Council of Assam (PTCA), a political outfit. In 1987, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) renewed the demand. **“Divide Assam fifty-fifty”**, was a call given by the ABSU’s then leader, Upendra Nath Brahma.
- The unrest was a fallout of the Assam Movement (1979-85), whose culmination – the Assam Accord – addressed the demands of protection and safeguards for the “Assamese people”, leading the Bodos to launch a movement to protect their own identity.
- This is the third Bodo accord to be signed in last 27 years when the violent movement for a separate Bodoland state claimed hundreds of lives, destruction of public and private properties.
- The first Bodo accord was signed with the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) in 1993, leading to creation of a Bodoland Autonomous Council with limited political powers.
- In 2003, the second Bodo accord was signed with the militant group Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT), leading to formation of a Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) with four districts of Assam -- Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri -- called the Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD).
- The BTC has control over 30 subjects like education, forests, horticulture but no jurisdiction on the police, revenue and general administration departments, which are controlled by the Assam government. The BTC was formed under the 6th Schedule of the Constitution.
- The demand for a separate state for the Bodos has been going on in Assam for about five decades and several Bodo overground and militant groups raising it leading to agitations, protests, violence and many deaths.

168. Scrapping of Andhra Pradesh Legislative Council

On the Andhra Pradesh Cabinet decided to abolish the state’s Legislative Council. The Council had last week referred the contentious capital decentralisation Bill to a Select Committee for review. After the Cabinet meeting, the Assembly will meet later today to introduce a resolution to abolish the Legislative Council (Absolute + Special Majority). After passing the resolution, the government will send it to the Governor for his approval and then send it to Parliament for ratification by simple majority.

What is Legislative Council?

- India has a bicameral system i.e., two Houses of Parliament. At the state level, the equivalent of the Lok Sabha is the Vidhan Sabha or Legislative Assembly; that of the Rajya Sabha is the Vidhan Parishad or Legislative Council.
- The Councils are less powerful than the Rajya Sabha, however. Unlike, the Rajya Sabha, which has substantial powers to shape non-financial legislation, Legislative Councils lack a constitutional mandate to do so; Assemblies can override suggestions/amendments made to a legislation by the Council.
- Also, unlike Rajya Sabha MPs, Members of the Legislative Council (MLCs) cannot vote in elections for the President and Vice President. The Vice President is the Rajya Sabha Chairperson; an MLC is the Council Chairperson.
- Although its membership may vary in each state, the Legislative Council must not have more than a third of the total membership of the Assembly of that state, and in no case fewer than 40 members.
- About 1/3rd of members are elected by members of the Assembly (MLAs), another 1/3rd by electorates consisting of members of municipalities, district boards and other local authorities in the state, 1/12th by an electorate consisting of teachers, and 1/12th by registered graduates.
- The remaining members are nominated by the Governor from among those who have distinguished themselves in literature, science, art, the cooperative movement, and social service. The Legislative Councils are permanent Houses, and like Rajya Sabha, one-third of their members retire every two years.

Arguments against Legislative Councils

Opposition to the idea of Legislative Councils is centered on three broad arguments. One, they can be used to park leaders who have not been able to win an election. Two, they can be used to delay progressive legislation. Three, they would strain state finances.

169. Democracy Index

- India slipped 10 places to 51st position in the latest Democracy Index global rankings published by The Economist Intelligence Unit. Its score, down from 7.23 in 2018 to 6.90 in 2019, is its lowest ever since the Democracy Index was begun in 2006, the report shows. The report ranks 165 independent states and two territories, covering almost the entire population of the world.
- The primary cause of the democratic regression was an erosion of civil liberties in the country, the report said. It mentioned the stripping of Jammu and Kashmir's special status with the repeal of Articles 370 and 35A, the various security measures that followed the bifurcation of the state including restriction of Internet access, and the exclusion of 1.9 million people from the final NRC.
- The Democracy Index is based on 5 main categories including civil liberties, electoral process and pluralism functioning of government; political participation; and political culture. On a scale of 0 to 10, India's scores were 8.67 in electoral process and pluralism, 6.79 in functioning of government; 6.67 in political participation; 5.63 in political culture; and 6.76 in civil liberties.

- Based on the total score, countries are classified as “full democracy” (scores greater than 8); “flawed democracy” (greater than 6 and up to 8); “hybrid regime” (greater than 4 and up to 6); or “authoritarian regime” (less than or equal to 4). By that yardstick, India’s score of 7.23 places it in the “flawed democracy” category, which also includes Bangladesh (5.88). Pakistan, with a score of 4.25, is categorised as a “hybrid democracy”; China (2.26) and North Korea (bottom-ranked with 1.08) are categorised as “authoritarian regimes”; and Norway (top-ranked with 9.87) is counted as a “full democracy”.
- Following Norway at the top of the rankings are Iceland (9.58), Sweden (9.39) and New Zealand (9.26). Other “full democracies” include Germany, the United Kingdom and France. The United States, with a score of 7.96 that is just below the benchmark for a “full democracy”, is a “flawed democracy”, in the same category as India. In 2019, the average global score fell from 5.48 in 2018 to 5.44, the worst result since 2006.

Country	Score	Rank
Norway	9.87	1
Iceland	9.58	2
Sweden	9.39	3
New Zealand	9.26	4
Germany	8.68	13
UK	8.52	14
France	8.12	20
United States	7.96	25
Israel	7.88	28
India	6.90	51
Brazil	6.86	52
Sri Lanka	6.27	69
Bangladesh	5.88	80
Nepal	5.28	92
Pakistan	4.25	108
Myanmar	3.55	122
Russia	3.11	134

170. The Chief Guest at the Republic Day

- The Chief Guest at the Republic Day parade is accorded India’s highest honour in protocol terms. The process of extending the invitation to a Head of State or Government starts around six months ahead of Republic Day. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) considers several issues, most importantly the nature of India’s relationship with the country concerned.
- Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was the chief guest at India’s Republic Day celebrations taking place today. Former Brazilian Presidents of Brazil, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, and President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, had visited in 1996 and 2004, respectively. After the MEA consideration, the Prime Minister’s approval is sought, followed by a clearance from the Rashtrapati Bhavan. India’s ambassadors in the countries concerned then try to ascertain discreetly the potential chief guests’ programme and availability for Republic Day.
- Apart from the main event of reviewing the Republic Day parade with the President of India, the Chief Guest’s visit includes the ceremonial guard of honour at Rashtrapati Bhavan, an evening reception hosted by the President, laying of a wreath at Rajghat, a banquet in the Chief Guest’s honour, a lunch hosted by the Prime Minister, and calls by the Vice-President and the External Affairs Minister.

171. RS Committee on Pornography on Social Media and its Effect on Children

- The ad hoc Rajya Sabha committee on ‘Pornography on Social Media and its effect on children’ headed by Congress leader Jairam Ramesh submitted its report. The committee’s basic mandate was to look at “access of children to pornographic material on social media” and “circulation of pornographic material on social media in which children are abused”.

- Overall, the committee, which was given a month's time, has made 40 recommendations after consulting with all stakeholders, including the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), the Ministry of Home Affairs, the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights and social media platforms such as Google, Facebook, WhatsApp, TikTok, Twitter and Sharechat.
- The report says that definition of child pornography needs to be broadened with additional clause to be inserted in the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO Act), 2012 under which advocating or counselling sexual activities with a person under the age of 18 through any written material, visual representation or audio recording or any characterisation is made an offence under the Act.
- It has recommended that the POCSO Act should have a provision on "cyber-grooming" which was defined in June 2016 by International Labour Organisation as "the process of establishing/building a relationship with a child either in person or through the use of the internet or other digital technologies to facilitate either online or offline sexual contact with that person."
- The committee has felt that there is a need for a code of conduct for the social media platforms. Explaining further, the report says that such a code should lay down "the general principles and practical guidelines for maintaining child safety online, ensuring age appropriate content and curbing use of children for pornographic purposes".
- The existing National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR) should also be appointed as the nodal agency to check child pornography. But to do so, the committee has recommended that the NCPCR be equipped with cyber policing expertise and powers to prosecute

172. Bodo Language

- Estimated to have 1.5 million speakers (Census 2011), Bodo is listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. It is spoken in Assam, where the Bodo tribe constitutes about 5-6% of the population, and in Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and West Bengal. The language is one of the key thrust areas in the Bodo Accord.
- While **Bodo is officially written in the Devanagiri script, the language has a history of having been written in at least three different scripts** – until in 1974, the Government recognised Devanagari as its official script. The language is believed to have had its own script in the pre-13th century era, when it was called Deodhai.
- The decades that followed saw use of both Assamese/Bangla and Roman scripts, until in 1962, the Bodo Sahitya Sabha, the apex Bodo literary body established in 1952, decided to use the Assamese script for Bodo textbooks to systemise the language.
- In 1972, many academics and scholars decided that it was better to return to the Roman script since the Assamese script wasn't conducive to certain Bodo pronunciations. In the 1970s, there was a sustained mass movement to that end, resulting in 18 deaths. This led to the then Indira Gandhi government asking the Bodos to use Devanagari as the official script, with a promise that it would be accorded an official Indian language status in the Eighth Schedule.

- It was only in 2003, under the then Bodo Accord, that the language was listed in the Eighth Schedule. The 2003 Accord was very significant for language because it was the first tribal language to be included in the Eight Schedule. The 2020 Accord makes Bodo the associate official language throughout Assam.
- The new Accord also promises to establish a separate directorate for Bodo medium schools, provincialise schools and colleges in the BTAD (Bodoland Territorial Autonomous District) and establish a Cultural Complex-cum-Centre of Excellence named after the late social activist Bodofa Upendranath Brahma in Kokrajhar for protection and promotion of the language.

173. Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020

Earlier this week, the Union Cabinet cleared a long-pending change to the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971 that raises the legally permissible limit for an abortion to 24 weeks from the current 20 weeks. Following the efforts of the Health Ministry, the change also accepts failure of contraception as a valid reason for abortion not just in married but also in unmarried women

Features of the Amendment Bill

- It increases the **maximum permissible gestation age for abortion to 24 weeks**, with the proviso that for pregnancies that are between 20-24 weeks opinions will be required from two doctors rather than one. This has been specially done keeping in mind “vulnerable women including survivors of rape, victims of incest and other vulnerable women (like differently-abled women, Minors) etc”.
- The upper gestation limit will not apply in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities diagnosed by a Medical Board. The composition, functions and other details of the Medical Board are to be prescribed subsequently in Rules under the Act. This clause has been put to keep such cases out of courts; the government deemed a Medical Board should examine the various aspects of the case and take a call.
- A national discourse on amendments needed to the MTP Act, 1971 in view of advancement of medical technologies dates back to 2008 when Haresh and Niketa Mehta petitioned the Bombay High Court to allow them to abort their 26-week-old foetus who had been diagnosed with a heart defect. It made the point that pre-natal diagnosis of defects had come a long way – and some defects could be revealed after 20 weeks has passed.
- Despite a sustained government push over years, contraceptive use in India is not very popular. According to a 2018 study by the Guttmacher Institute, 50% of pregnancies in six of the larger Indian states – Assam, Bihar, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh – are unintended. Data from the National Family Health Survey 4 show that just 47.8% of couples in the country use modern contraceptive methods; only 53% use any method at all.

174. Economic Survey and CEA

- The Economic Survey is a report the government presents on the state of the economy in the past one year, the key challenges it anticipates, and their possible solutions.
- The document is prepared by the Economic Division of the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) under the guidance of the CEA, currently Dr Krishnamurthy Subramanian.

- CEA is a post in Government of India and is equivalent to rank of Secretary to the Government of India. Until 2009, the CEA's position was a Union Public Service Commission appointment and until the 1970s almost all CEAs were members of the Indian Economic Service.
- Once prepared, the Survey is approved by the Finance Minister.
- The first Economic Survey was presented in 1950-51. Until 1964, the document would be presented along with the Budget.
- The government is not constitutionally bound to present the Economic Survey or to follow the recommendations that are made in it. If the government so chooses, it can reject all suggestions laid out in the document. But while the Centre is not obliged to present the Survey at all, it is tabled because of the significance it holds.
- Apart from CEA, there is also the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (PMEAC) which is a non-constitutional, non-permanent and independent body constituted to give economic advice to the Government of India, specifically the Prime Minister.
- The council serves to highlight key economic issues facing the country to the government of India from a neutral viewpoint. It advises the Prime Minister on economic issues like inflation, microfinance, and industrial output. PMEAC is responsible for two crucial periodic reports- the annual Economic Outlook and Review of the Economy.
- In the latest occurrence, Prime minister Modi revived the body on 25 September 2017. The PMEAC is chaired by a Chairperson and consists of eminent economists as members. Currently PMEAC chairman post is held by Bibek Debroy. It is supported in its functions by a team of officials and administrators. There is no fixed definition on the exact number of members and staff of the PMEAC. At one point it was even chaired by the then Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee himself. For administrative, logistic, planning and budgeting purposes, the NITI Aayog serves as the Nodal Agency for the PMEAC.

175. 15th Finance Commission

- **Article 280 of the Constitution requires that a Finance Commission** be constituted to recommend the distribution of the net proceeds of taxes between the Centre and states, and among the states.
- The framers of the Constitution were seeking to address the vertical imbalance between the taxation powers and expenditure and responsibilities of the federal government and the states, and the horizontal imbalance, or inequality, between states that were at different stages of development. Ensuring inclusiveness is, therefore, a key mandate of the Finance Commission. That means assigning weights to things like population, the fiscal distance between the top ranked states and the others, etc.
- The framers of the Constitution were seeking to address the vertical imbalance between the taxation powers and expenditure and responsibilities of the federal government and the states, and the horizontal imbalance, or inequality, between states that were at different stages of development. Much has changed since the First Commission was set up in November 1951 under the Chairmanship of K C Neogy, a former member of the Constituent Assembly and diwan of a princely state.

- From 10% of the total tax receipts of the Centre in 1950, it rose to a record 42% after the recommendations of the Fourteenth Finance Commission headed by Y V Reddy – a share that made previous awards look conservative, and sat well with the spirit of cooperative federalism. The report of the Fifteenth Finance Commission, along with an Action Taken Report, was tabled in Parliament on Saturday (February 1).

Main Recommendations of 15th Finance Commission:

- The Fifteenth Finance Commission headed by N.K. Singh has recommended that this allocation be reduced by a percentage point to 41% in order to meet the security and special needs of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The Fifteenth Finance Commission (FC) has considered the 2011 population along with forest cover, tax effort, area of the state, and “demographic performance” to arrive at the states’ share in the divisible pool of taxes. As had been widely anticipated, shares of the southern states, except Tamil Nadu, have fallen – with Karnataka losing the most.
- In order to reward population control efforts by states, the Commission developed a criterion for demographic effort – which is essentially the ratio of the state’s population in 1971 to its fertility rate in 2011 – with a weight of 12.5%. States such as Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana have fertility rates below the replacement rate, or the number of children that have to be born to a woman of reproductive age in order for the population to maintain itself at the current level without migration.
- The total area of states, area under forest cover, and “income distance” were also used by the FC to arrive at the tax-sharing formula. Income distance is calculated as the difference between the per capita gross state domestic product (GSDP) of the state from that of the state with the highest per capita GSDP, with states with less income getting a higher share in order to allow them to provide services comparable to those provided by the richer ones.
- The Commission used the per capita GSDP of Haryana as the reference for calculating the income distance, and gave it a weight of 45%, down from the 50% assigned by the 14th FC. The weight assigned to state area was unchanged at 15%, and that of forest cover was increased from 7.5% to 10%.
- The Commission has said that it intends to set up an expert group to initiate a non-lapsable fund for defence expenditure.
- The terms of reference of the Commission included considering the Centre’s demand for funds for defence and national security. It may do so by creating a separate fund from the gross tax revenue before computing the divisible pool – which means that states would get a smaller share of the taxes.

176. Writ of Mandamus

The Supreme Court with the bench of Justices L Nageswara Rao and Hemant Gupta has ruled that reservation in the matter of promotions in public posts is not a fundamental right, and a state cannot be compelled to offer the quota if it chooses not to. It was stated that no mandamus can be issued by the court directing state governments to provide reservations.

What is Mandamus?

- Mandamus is among the “prerogative writs” in English common law — meaning the extraordinary writs or orders granted by the Sovereign when ordinary legal remedies are inadequate. These are habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, certiorari, and quo warranto. In India, the Supreme Court can issue prerogative writs under Article 32 of the Constitution, and the High Courts under Article 226.
- Mandamus literally means ‘we command’. When issued to a person or body, the writ of mandamus demands some activity on their part. It orders the person or body to perform a public or quasi-public duty, which they have refused to perform, and where no other adequate legal remedy exists to enforce the performance of that duty.
- The writ cannot be issued unless the legal duty is of public nature, and to whose performance the applicant of the writ has a legal right.
- The remedy is of a discretionary nature — a court can refuse to grant it when an alternative remedy exists. However, for enforcing fundamental rights, the alternative remedy argument does not hold as much weight, since it is the duty of the Supreme Court and the High Courts to enforce fundamental rights. When a public officer or government does an act that violates the fundamental right of a person, the court would issue a writ of mandamus against such authorities so that the person’s rights are not infringed.
- The writ can also be issued against inferior courts or other judicial bodies when they have refused to exercise their jurisdiction and perform their duty.
- Under Article 361, mandamus cannot be granted against the President or Governor of a State, “for the exercise and performance of the powers and duties of his office or for any act done or purporting to be done by him in the exercise and performance of those powers and duties”.
- The writ also cannot be issued against a private individual or body, except where the State is in collusion with the private party for contravening a provision of the Constitution or a statute.

177. Select Committee on Surrogacy Bill

In a recent report, a Select Committee of Parliament has recommended that the contentious clause limiting surrogacy only to “close relatives” be removed from the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019, to make the benefits of modern technology more easily available to infertile couples.

What is Surrogacy Bill?

- The Surrogacy Bill proposes to allow altruistic ethical surrogacy to intending infertile Indian married couples in the age groups 23-50 years (women) and 26-55 years (men). The couple should have been legally married for at least five years and should be Indian citizens. They cannot have a surviving child, either biological or adopted, except when they have a child who is mentally or physically challenged or suffers from a life-threatening disorder with no permanent cure.
- The Bill has already been scrutinised once earlier by the Standing Committee on Health and Family Welfare. It requires surrogacy clinics to be registered, and national and state surrogacy boards to be formed, and makes commercial surrogacy, and abandoning or disowning a surrogate child punishable by imprisonment up to 10 years and a fine up to Rs 10 lakh.

Changes recommended:

- The Select Committee chaired by BJP Rajya Sabha MP Bhupender Yadav recommended that the “close relatives” clause should be removed, and any “willing” woman should be allowed to become a surrogate mother provided all other requirements are met and the appropriate authority has cleared the surrogacy. It has strongly backed the ban on commercial surrogacy.
- It has also recommended that divorced and widowed women aged between 35 and 45 years should be able to be a single commissioning parent, and the need for a five-year waiting period for childless married couples could be waived if there is a medical certificate that shows that they cannot possibly conceive. It has recommended that persons of Indian origin should be allowed to avail surrogacy services.
- The committee has not, however, recommended expanding the definition of commissioning parent to include singles, either men or women. The Select Committee also recommended that the ART Bill (which deals with assisted reproductive technologies) should be brought before the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019, so that all the highly technical and medical aspects could be properly addressed in the Surrogacy (Regulation) Bill, 2019.

178. Web Portal Launched for Star Rating of Mines

- In order to promote green, safe and sustainable mining practices using technology as a tool, Ministry of Coal (MoC) has launched a web portal for star rating of coal mines. This portal enables all operational coal mines across India for self-rating, their subsequent validation by Coal Controller's Organization (CCO), further evaluation and finally award of star rating.
- Based on the star ratings obtained through a well-defined mechanism on this web portal, the highest scoring mines in the country will be awarded in a public ceremony. Besides, all the mines will be given an official certificate by the CCO mentioning their star rating and the particular reporting year.
- The mines that score from 91 to 100% will get 5 star, 81 to 90% 4 star, 71 to 80% 3 star, 61 to 70% 2 star, 41 to 60% 1 star and mines that score from 0 to 40% will get No star on the portal as per laid down procedures of the Star Rating Policy for Coal Mines in India.
- Notably, Ministry of Coal last year had formulated a Star Rating Policy for Coal Mines in India. This policy envisages 50 evaluation parameters in Opencast Mines and 47 in Underground Mines as star rating criteria under seven broad modules namely - Mining Operations Related Parameters, Environment related parameters, Adoption of Technologies: Best Mining Practices, Economic performance, Rehabilitation & Resettlement related parameters, Worker related Compliance and Safety and security related parameters.

179. National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage

- Sangeet Natak Akademi (SNA), an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Culture is the nodal agency for the Scheme for ‘Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage and Diverse Cultural Traditions of India’. As of now, SNA is collaborating with Zonal Cultural Centers of Ministry, collating and preparing a list of ICH elements for National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

- List of ICH elements is being compiled and at least 100 elements will be documented by March, 2020 and the aim is to document at least 20 new elements in ICH list every year. Along with this establishment of an 'Indian Institute for Culture' is at conceptual stage and a mission called National Culture Mapping portal is being conceptualized for aggregating art forms and artists. It is in pilot phase.

180. National Bureau of Water Use Efficiency

- To address the present challenges in water sector, revision of National Water Policy has been envisaged by the Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti and a drafting committee has been constituted on 5th November, 2019 to revise the National Water Policy.
- The main objective of the National Water Policy is to take cognizance of the existing situation in water sector, to propose a framework for creation of a system of laws and institutions and for a plan of action with a unified national perspective in planning, management and use of water resources.
- Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti has prepared a draft Memorandum with proposed structure and activities of National Bureau of Water Use Efficiency for consideration of the Committee on Establishment Expenditure.

181. National Health Policy with Emphasis on EWSs

- The Government has formulated the National Health Policy, 2017, which aims at attainment of the highest possible level of good health and well-being, through a preventive and promotive health care orientation in all developmental policies, and universal access to good quality health care services without anyone having to face financial hardship as a consequence.
- One of the key principles of the policy is to reduce inequity which would mean affirmative action to reach the poorest. It would mean minimizing disparity on account of gender, poverty, caste, disability, other forms of social exclusion and geographical barriers.
- The policy also recognizes the special health needs of tribal and socially vulnerable population groups and recommends situation specific measures in provisioning and delivery of services.
- To encourage doctors working in remote and/or difficult and/or rural areas, Medical Council of India with the approval of Central Government, has amended the Post Graduate Medical Education Regulations, 2000 to provide :-
 - ✓ 50% of the seats in Post Graduate Diploma Courses shall be reserved for Medical Officers in the Government service, who have served for at least three years in remote and/or difficult and/or rural areas. After acquiring the PG Diploma, the Medical Officers shall serve for two more years in remote and/or difficult and/or rural areas; and
 - ✓ Incentive at the rate of upto 10% of the marks obtained for each year in service in remote and/or difficult or rural areas upto the maximum of 30% of the marks obtained in the entrance test for admissions in Post Graduate Medical Courses.

182. Medical Device (Amendment) Rules 2020

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare recently notified changes in the Medical Devices Rules, 2017 to regulate medical devices on the same lines as drugs under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.

Called the Medical Devices (Amendment) Rules, 2020, these are applicable to devices “intended for internal or external use in the diagnosis, treatment, mitigation or prevention of disease or disorder in human beings or animals” (as notified by the ministry) and require online registration of these devices “with the Central Licensing Authority through an identified online portal established by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation for this purpose”.

- Among the information that the manufacturer has to upload are “name & address of the company or firm or any other entity manufacturing the medical device along with name and address of manufacturing site of medical device (and) certificate of compliance with respect to ISO 13485 standard accredited by National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies or International Accreditation Forum in respect of such medical device”.
- This would mean that every medical device, either manufactured in India or imported, will have to have quality assurance before they can be sold anywhere in the country. The notification calls for a voluntary registration within a period of 18 months from April 2020 and obtaining manufacturing/import licence under the Medical Device Rules within 36 months for some devices and 42 months for others.

Items covered

- A large number of commonly used items including hypodermic syringes and needles, cardiac stents, perfusion sets, catheters, orthopaedic implants, bone cements, lenses, sutures, internal prosthetic replacements etc are covered under the new rules.
- For some items such as sphygmomanometers (used to monitor blood pressure), glucometers (to check blood sugar), thermometers, CT scan and MRI equipment, dialysis and X-ray machines, implants etc, different deadlines for compliance have been set. For example for the first three, it is January 2021, for the others it is April next year. For ultrasound equipment, it is November 2020.
- In October 2019 the ministry had circulated copies of the then proposed notification for public comments following recommendations of the Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB), which is the highest technical body for these decisions and has experts among its members- In April last year, the DTAB had recommended that all medical devices should be notified as “drugs” under the drug regulation law to ensure they maintain safety and quality standards. The notification makes it clear that the government has issued it in consultation with the DTAB.
- The health sector has been at the centre of attention following revelations about faulty hip implants marketed by pharma major Johnson & Johnson. This has caused major embarrassment to the government, too, as it exposed the lack of regulatory teeth when it came to medical devices.

183. Reservation and Ninth Schedule

Recently, LJP leader Chirag Paswan said that reservation should be put under the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution. His comments came days after the Supreme Court ruled that reservation in the matter of

promotions in public posts was not a fundamental right, and that a state cannot be compelled to offer quota if it chooses not to.

What is Ninth Schedule?

- The Ninth Schedule contains a list of central and state laws which cannot be challenged in courts. Currently, 284 such laws are shielded from judicial review.
- The Schedule became a part of the Constitution in 1951, when the document was amended for the first time. It was created by the new Article 31B, which along with 31A was brought in by the government to protect laws related to agrarian reform and for abolishing the Zamindari system. While A. 31A extends protection to 'classes' of laws, A. 31B shields specific laws or enactments.
- The First Amendment added 13 laws to the Schedule. Subsequent amendments in 1955, 1964, 1971, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1984, 1990, 1994, and 1999 have taken the number of protected laws to 284. Article 31B also has retrospective operation: meaning if laws are inserted in the Ninth Schedule after they are declared unconstitutional, they are considered to have been in the Schedule since their commencement, and thus valid.
- In 2007 the Supreme Court held that it can strike down any law which is included in the Ninth Schedule, if, in its opinion, the law violates the basic structure of the Constitution and if it was inserted after April 24, 1973 (the day the Keshavananda Bharati judgment was delivered.) Thus, the final arbiter on what are fundamental rights, what amounts to a violation of fundamental rights and what are the basic features of the Constitution is now the Supreme Court.
- While most of the laws protected under the Schedule concern agriculture/land issues, the list includes other subjects, such as reservation. A Tamil Nadu law that provides 69% reservation in the state is part of the Schedule.

184. Corporate Train Model in Indian Railways

The Kashi Mahakal Express is the country's third 'corporate' train after the two Tejas Express trains between Delhi-Lucknow and Mumbai-Ahmedabad started over the past few months. This is a new model being actively pushed by Indian Railways to 'outsource' the running of regular passengers trains to its PSU, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC).

Corporate Model

- In this model, the corporation takes all the decisions of running the service — fare, food, onboard facilities, housekeeping, complaints etc. Indian Railways is free from these encumbrances and gets to earn from IRCTC a pre-decided amount, being the owner of the network. This amount has three components- haulage, lease and custody.
- Presently, the IRCTC has to pay Indian Railways a sum total of these three charges, roughly Rs 14 lakh for the Lucknow Tejas runs in a day (up and down) and then factor in a profit over and above this. This money is payable even if the occupancy is below expectation and the train is not doing good business.

Role of IRCTC

- Being a corporate entity with a Board of Directors and investors, IRCTC insists that the coaches it gets from Railways are new and not in a run-down condition, as is seen in many trains.

- The quality of the coaches has a direct bearing on its business. In this model, IRCTC has full flexibility to decide the service parameters and even alter them without having to go to Railway ministry or its policies.
- To that end, the business of running trains can be run with the independence needed to run a business with profit motive. This, policymakers believe creates the environment for enhanced service quality and user experience for the passengers.
- IRCTC gets the freedom to decide even the number of stoppages it wants to afford on a route, depending on the needs of its business model.
- The Lucknow Tejas, for instance, has two stops, whereas the Mumbai-Ahmedabad Tejas has six stops. These stops are business decisions.

185. National Survey on Manual Scavenging

- A National Survey in 18 states identified 62,904 manual scavengers between 2013 and January 31, 2020. Tabling the data in Parliament, the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment said there have been no reports of deaths due to manual scavenging, but also acknowledged reports received by the National Commission for Safai Karamcharis about deaths of people while cleaning septic tanks and sewers.
- Manual scavenging has been prohibited under The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013, in all states and Union Territories with effect from December 6, 2013. The Ministry said the reason manual scavenging happens is the existence of unsanitary latrines that require manual cleaning.
- The number of deaths of individuals who died while cleaning septic and sewer tanks, as tabled by the Ministry, add up to 376 between 2015 and 2019. The number peaked last year at 110. In 2019, Uttar Pradesh reported the highest number of such deaths at 21, followed by Gujarat (16), Tamil Nadu (15) and Haryana (14). In 2017 and 2018, too, the most such deaths were reported by Uttar Pradesh, at 18 and 11, respectively.

186. The Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and their Rehabilitation Act, 2013

- The Act prohibits the employment of manual scavengers, the manual cleaning of sewers and septic tanks without protective equipment, and the construction of insanitary latrines.
- It seeks to rehabilitate manual scavengers and provide for their alternative employment.
- Each local authority, cantonment board and railway authority is responsible for surveying insanitary latrines within its jurisdiction. They shall also construct a number of sanitary community latrines.
- Each occupier of insanitary latrines shall be responsible for converting or demolishing the latrine at his own cost. If he fails to do so, the local authority shall convert the latrine and recover the cost from him.
- The District Magistrate and the local authority shall be the implementing authorities.
- Offences under the Bill shall be cognizable and non-bailable, and may be tried summarily.

187. Treatment of Child Witnesses

- The Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights has pulled up the district police in Bidar for violations, including repeated questioning of the children belonging to the school where a play critical of CAA was staged and sedition charges were slapped.
- Additionally, a public interest petition has been filed in the Karnataka High Court seeking a departmental inquiry against the policemen who allegedly questioned the children of Shaheen School, aged between 9 and 12, without the consent of their parents or guardians, and also video-recorded them without consent.
- The PIL has asked for guidelines to be issued to police regarding interrogation of minors in criminal proceedings in accordance with the Juvenile Justice Act and United Nations resolutions.

International Conventions

- India has been a signatory to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1992, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1989 which states that maximum consideration should be paid to the child's interests in all actions but private or public institutions and authorities. In 2009, the 'United Nations: Justice in Matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses in Crime: Model Law' provided a more specific set of guidelines in the context of child witnesses. These guidelines recommend that authorities treat children in a caring and sensitive manner, with interview techniques that "minimise distress or trauma to children".
- They recommend specifically that an investigator specially trained in dealing with children be appointed to guide the interview of the child, using a child-sensitive approach and prevent secondary victimisation. Secondary victimisation is defined as victimisation that occurs not as a direct result of a criminal act, but through the response of institutions and individuals to the victim.

Indian Laws and Child Witnesses

- Under Section 118 of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, there is no minimum age for a witness. Children as young as three years old have deposed before trial courts in cases of sexual abuse. Usually during a trial, the court, before recording the testimony of a child witness, determines his or her competency on the basis of their ability to give rational answers.
- If the child is very young and does not understand the significance of taking an oath to speak the truth – which is administered to each witness before testimony – the judge or the staff explain to the child that he or she should speak the truth, thinking of whichever God they believe in.

The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

- The primary legislation in the country pertaining to children is The Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015. The Act does not provide guidelines specifically relating to questioning or interviewing of children as witnesses.
- The Act's very preamble, however, says that a "child-friendly approach in the adjudication and disposal of matters in the best interest of children" must be adhered to.
- This means adhering to general guidelines pertaining to the juvenile justice system – for instance, for the police to not be in their uniform while dealing with children. It also requires that interviews of children be done by specialised units of police who are trained to sensitively deal with them.

- The Act prescribes that a Special Juvenile Police Unit is to be constituted by the state government in each district and city, headed by a police officer not below the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police, and including two social workers, at least one of whom must be a woman, and both of whom should be experienced in the field of child welfare.
- The Act also provides for a Child Welfare Committee in every district to take cognisance of any violations by the authorities in their handling of children.

The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act

- Apart from the Juvenile Justice Act, The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012 has specific guidelines regarding interviewing children as witnesses. While it pertains to child sexual abuse victims, child rights activists say the guidelines are a framework for all children who are being interviewed by the police as witnesses.
- The Act states that interviews should be conducted in a safe, neutral, child-friendly environment, including allowing for them to be done at homes. It says a child should not be made to recount the incident in question multiple times. The Act also allows for a support person, who could be trained in counselling, to be present with the child to reduce stress and trauma.

Court guidelines

- The Delhi High Court has come up with guidelines for recording of evidence of vulnerable witnesses in criminal matters. A vulnerable witness is defined as anyone who has not completed 18 years of age.
- Focusing primarily on child witnesses giving testimonies that are recorded in court, the Delhi High Court guidelines underline the importance of the criminal justice system needing to respond proactively, sensitively, and in an age-appropriate manner when dealing with children.
- They allow for a facilitator for a vulnerable witness to be appointed by a court for effective communication between various stakeholders including the police.
- In 2016, the Delhi High Court said that while children can be pliable, their testimony can be considered after careful scrutiny.

188. Law and Order and Powers of the Delhi Govt.

- The NCT of Delhi, under Article 239 AA, has been given a special status, which gives powers of law-making and administration to an elected legislature and the council of ministers. The law, however, puts two subjects – public order and police – directly under the Union government.
- Even here, there are exceptions. Two sections of Criminal Procedure Code (CRPC) – 129 & 130 – give the Executive Magistrate certain powers relating to “unlawful assembly”. If a group is found in unlawful assembly under Section 129 CRPC, the Executive Magistrate can issue orders to these persons to disperse. If this fails, the magistrate can use the civil force – which is the police.
- If these efforts too fail, the Executive Magistrate, under Section 130 CRPC, can call an officer of the armed forces of the Union to disperse the assembly. This section states that it can be invoked for “public security”. Therefore, under these two limited powers, the Executive Magistrate, who reports to the Chief Minister, can issue orders relating to public security.

Powers of full-fledged states

- While public order and police are under the state list, the state government may request the Union government to make available armed forces to help restore public order. Even in circumstances where public disorder is not so serious as to fall in the category of an “internal disturbance” as defined in Article 355 of the Constitution, the Union Government may accede to the request.
- However, it is important to note that except for the limited purpose of dispersing an “unlawful assembly” and arresting its members – for which Section 130 CRPC empowers the Executive Magistrate to requisition the aid of the Army – neither the state government nor any authority under it has been conferred by the Constitution any legal right to call the armed forces while dealing with a public disorder or “internal disturbance”.
- Also, the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution – which deals with the subject of public order in the state list – states that use of the armed forces in the maintenance of public order is outside the purview of the states.

Past Incidents

- During the 1984 anti Sikh riots, the Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission of Inquiry has found that there was a delay on the part of the Delhi administration (Lt Governor and Commissioner of Police) in calling the Army, though about 5,000 Army men were available by midnight of October 31, the day of the assassination.
- The Nanavati Commission too had agreed with the findings of the Justice Mishra Commission on the delay in calling the Army.

189. Air Quality Report

- India accounts for two-thirds of the world’s most polluted cities – 21 of the most polluted 30 cities; 14 of the highest 20; and 6 of the highest 10 – in the 2019 World Air Quality Report released by the pollution tracker IQ Air and Greenpeace on Tuesday.
- The ranking is based on a comparison of PM2.5 levels. Among countries, when population is taken into account, average PM2.5 pollution is highest in Bangladesh, followed by Pakistan, while India is at number 5.
- While cities in India, on average, exceed the WHO target for annual PM2.5 exposure by 500%, national air pollution decreased by 20% from 2018 to 2019, with 98% of cities experiencing improvements. These improvements are believed to be largely a result of economic slowdown, IQ Air said. It said 90% of the global population breathing unsafe air.
- China is at number 11 in the list of countries affected by population, with population factored in. Chinese cities achieved a 9% average decrease in PM2.5 levels in 2019.

190. Vacancies and elections in Rajya Sabha

- Elections to 55 Rajya Sabha seats will be held on March 26, the Election Commission announced on February 25. These seats will be filled by representatives from 17 states.
- The terms of 51 members will end in April. The other four seats are already vacant. The strength of Rajya Sabha is 238 currently.

- Elections to Rajya Sabha are indirect with state MLAs electing MPs through promotional representation by single transferable vote.

191. Election Card not a proof of Citizenship

- On February 11, a magistrate's court in Mumbai ruled that an "election card or voting card" is "sufficient proof of citizenship", and acquitted two individuals whom police had accused of being "Bangladeshi infiltrators".
- However, on February 12, a division bench of the High Court of Gauhati ruled in two separate cases that an Electoral Photo Identity Card (EPIC) was not conclusive proof of citizenship.
- The High Court reiterated the law laid down by the court in an earlier case, Md Babul Islam vs State of Assam [WP(C) No. 3547 of 2016], which "held that Electoral Photo Identity Card is not a proof of citizenship".
- The position taken by Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate A H Kashikar in Mumbai is the same as the one that the Election Commission of India had underlined in a unique case five years ago, when one Roshan Shah, a Canadian national who was originally from Gujarat, tried to stand for elections, in a bid to "test" election laws and rules. That 2015 case resulted in the Election Commission amending Forms 2A to 2H to underline the direct link between the citizenship of a person and the electoral system.
- On September 16, 2016, the Election Commission issued a notification making "provisions for furnishing photograph of candidate also with the nomination form, and for declaration regarding citizenship of candidate". This resulted in Forms 2A to 2H being amended. It also underscored the link between the citizenship of a person and the electoral process, Election Commission officials said.
- Also, Form 6 of the Registration of Electors' Rules, 1960, under The Representation of the People Act, 1951, has an inbuilt declaration on citizenship from the voter in line with the Constitution — if a voter declares that s/he is a citizen, and this is accepted by the registration authority, s/he becomes an elector, thus establishing a direct link between being a citizen and having the right to vote.
- The connection between being a citizen and the right to be on the voters' list that Form 6 provides, was cited by Judge Kashikar in his order.

192. Unifying Defence resources

On Feb 24th, Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat said his office is working on a tentative timeline for the establishment of joint commands among the three defence services — Army, Navy and Air Force — beginning with an Air Defence Command.

What are Joint Commands?

- Joint Command is a unified command in which the resources of all the services are unified under a single commander looking at a geographical theatre. It means that a single military commander, as per the requirements, will have the resources of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force to manage a security threat.
- The commander of a joint command will have the freedom to train and equip his command as per the objective, and will have logistics of all the services at his beckoning.

- The three services will retain their independent identities as well.
- There are two tri-services commands at the moment.
- The joint command at the moment, the Andaman and Nicobar Command (ANC), is a theatre command, which is headed by the chiefs of the three services in rotation. It was created in 2001 after a Group of Ministers had given a report on national security following the Kargil War.
- The Strategic Forces Command was established in 2006 and is a functional tri-services command.

Present Structure

- There are 17 commands, divided among the three services.
- The Army and the Air Force have seven commands each, while the Navy has three commands.
- The commands under the Army are Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western, Central, Southwestern and the Army Training Command. The Air Force has Eastern, Western, Southern, Southwestern, Central, Maintenance and Training commands, and the Navy is divided into Western, Eastern and Southern commands.
- These commands report to their respective services, and are headed by three-star officers. Though these commands are in the same regions, but they are not located together.

Advantages

- One of the main advantages is that the leader of a unified command has control over more varied resources, compared to the heads of the commands under the services now.
- The other key advantage is that through such integration and jointness the three forces will be able to avoid duplication of resources. The services will get to know one another better, strengthening cohesion in the defence establishment.
- The study for a proposed Air Defence Command has already been initiated and reports on the details of the command are expected by end of March. He said the Air Defence Command should start becoming operational by the end of this year, and the Peninsula Command by the end of 2021, followed by theatre commands – joint commands looking at the land boundaries – with the first of these to begin rolling out by the end of 2022.
- Several major militaries are divided into integrated theatre commands. China's People's Liberation Army has five theatre commands: Eastern, Western, Northern, Southern and Central. Its Western Theatre Command is responsible for India.
- The US Armed Forces has 11 unified commands, of which seven are geographic and four functional commands. Its geographic commands are Africa, Central, European, Indo-Pacific, Northern, Southern and Space. Cyber, Special Operations, Transportation and Strategic are its functional commands.

193. Delhi's Happiness Curriculum

The happiness curriculum is one of the flagship schemes of the Delhi government in the education sector launched in July 2018 in all government schools. Citing the World Happiness Report, 2018, in which India ranked 133 among 155 nations in the global rankings, the curriculum calls for schools in India to promote

development in cognition, language, literacy, numeracy and the arts along with addressing the well-being and happiness of students.

Objectives

- The objectives of this curriculum include developing self-awareness and mindfulness, inculcating skills of critical thinking and inquiry, enabling learners to communicate effectively and helping learners to apply life skills to deal with stressful and conflicting situations around them.

Implementation

- The curriculum is designed for students of classes nursery through the eighth standard. Group 1 consists of students in nursery and KG, who have bi-weekly classes (45 minutes each for one session, which is supervised by a teacher) involving mindfulness activities and exercise.
- Children between classes 1-2 attend classes on weekdays, which involves mindfulness activities and exercises along with taking up reflective questions.
- The second group comprises students from classes 3-5 and the third group is comprised of students from classes 6-8 who apart from the aforementioned activities, take part in self-expression and reflect on their behavioural changes.

Learning Outcomes

- The learning outcomes of this curriculum are spread across four categories:
 - ✓ becoming mindful and attentive (developing increased levels of self-awareness, developing active listening, remaining in the present);
 - ✓ developing critical thinking and reflection (developing strong abilities to reflect on one's own thoughts and behaviours, thinking beyond stereotypes and assumptions);
 - ✓ developing social-emotional skills (demonstrating empathy, coping with anxiety and stress, developing better communication skills) and;
 - ✓ developing a confident and pleasant personality (developing a balanced outlook on daily life reflecting self-confidence, becoming responsible and reflecting awareness towards cleanliness, health and hygiene).
- The assessment under this curriculum is qualitative, focusing on the “process rather than the outcome” and noting that each student’s journey is unique and different

194. Preventive Detention

- TDP president and former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh N. Chandrababu Naidu was taken into custody under preventive detention at Visakhapatnam Airport on 27th Feb. He was taken into preventive detention under CrPC section 151 (arrest to prevent the commission of cognizable offences), “in the interest of the safety” of Naidu and his followers.

Difference between Punitive and Preventive Detention:

- Punitive detention is the detention as a punishment for the crime committed by an individual. It takes place after the actual commission of an offence or at least after an attempt has been made.

Preventive detention is the detention made as a precautionary measure. This kind of detention can be made by the authorities even on a slight apprehension that the person can commit a crime.

What is Preventive Detention?

- Preventive detention was introduced by the British colonial laws such as Bengal regulation act and Defence of India Act. These were continued by India post independence as well. Under Section 151 of The Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 (CRPC) preventive detention is action taken on grounds of suspicion that some wrong actions may be done by the person concerned.
- A police officer can arrest an individual without orders from a Magistrate and without any warrant if he gets any information that such an individual can commit any offence. Article 22 of the Indian Constitution provides protection against arrest and detention in certain cases.

Reasons for Preventive Detention:

- Preventive detention can, however, be made only on four grounds. The grounds for Preventive detention are:
 - ✓ Security of state, maintenance of public order,
 - ✓ maintenance of supplies and essential services and defence,
 - ✓ foreign affairs or security of India.
- The Centre under List I of Schedule 7 deals with Defence, foreign affairs and security of India while states under List III deal with maintenance of public order, security of state and maintenance of essential services. Various laws such as National Security Act (NASA), Prevention of Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act (PTINDPSA), Prevention of Black-marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities Act (PBMSECA), Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act (COFEPOSA) etc deal with Preventive detention.

Safeguards available under Preventive Detention:

- Clauses 4-7 of Article 22 deal with Preventive detention. The clause (4) of the article states that no individual can be detained for more than 3 months unless a bench of High court judges or an Advisory board decides to extend the date.
- The clause (4) of Article 22, reads as, "No law providing for preventive detention shall authorise the detention of a person for a longer period than three months unless (a) an Advisory Board consisting of persons who are, or have been, or are qualified to be appointed as, Judges of a High Court has reported before the expiration of the said period of three months that there is in its opinion sufficient cause for such detention:
- The clause(5) of the Article 22 states that the detained individual should be made aware of the grounds he/she has been detained (in pursuance of the order) and should provide him/her with an opportunity of making a representation against the case.
- However clause 6 makes it clear that in clause (5) shall require the authority making any such order as is referred to in that clause to disclose facts which such authority considers to be against the public interest to disclose.

Clause 7 gives Indian Parliament the power to make laws that may prescribe:

1. the circumstances under which, and the class or classes of cases in which, a person may be detained for a period longer than three months under any law providing for preventive detention without obtaining the opinion of an Advisory Board in accordance with the provisions of sub clause (a) of clause (4);
2. the maximum period for which any person may in any class or classes of cases be detained under any law providing for preventive detention; and
3. the procedure to be followed by an Advisory Board in an inquiry under sub clause (a) of clause (4)
Right against Exploitation

195. Central Consumer Protection Authority

- Recently, the Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution Ram Vilas Paswan announced that a Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) will be established by the first week of April. This was after the Minister held consultations with industry representatives about the role and functioning of a proposed CCPA.

Constitution of CCPA and Powers:

- The authority is being constituted under Section 10(1) of The Consumer Protection Act, 2019. The Act replaced The Consumer Protection Act, 1986, and seeks to widen its scope in addressing consumer concerns. The new Act recognises offences such as providing false information regarding the quality or quantity of a good or service, and misleading advertisements. It also specifies action to be taken if goods and services are found “dangerous, hazardous or unsafe”.
- The CCPA, introduced in the new Act, aims to protect the rights of the consumer by cracking down on unfair trade practices, and false and misleading advertisements that are detrimental to the interests of the public and consumers.
- The CCPA will have the powers to inquire or investigate into matters relating to violations of consumer rights or unfair trade practices suo motu, or on a complaint received, or on a direction from the central government. Sources said the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution is in the process of finalising the rules relating to the composition and functioning of the CCPA, and these are expected to be notified by April.
- While conducting an investigation after preliminary inquiry, officers of the CCPA’s Investigation Wing will have the powers to enter any premise and search for any document or article, and to seize these. For search and seizure, the CCPA will have similar powers given under the provisions of The Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.
- The CCPA can file complaints of violation of consumer rights or unfair trade practices before the District Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, State Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission, and the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission. It will issue safety notices to alert consumers against dangerous or hazardous or unsafe goods or services.

Structure of CCPA:

- Sources said the proposed authority will be a lean body with a Chief Commissioner as head, and only two other commissioners as members – one of whom will deal with matters relating to goods while

the other will look into cases relating to services. It will be headquartered in the National Capital Region of Delhi but the central government may set up regional offices in other parts of the country.

- The CCPA will have an Investigation Wing that will be headed by a Director General. District Collectors too, will have the power to investigate complaints of violations of consumer rights, unfair trade practices, and false or misleading advertisements.

Categorisation of goods:

- This is not specified in the notification of the Act. Regarding food, an official said the CCPA will ensure that all standards on packaged food items set by regulators such as the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) are being followed.
- Under Section 20 of The Consumer Protection Act, the proposed authority will have powers to recall goods or withdrawal of services that are “dangerous, hazardous or unsafe; pass an order for refund the prices of goods or services so recalled to purchasers of such goods or services; and discontinuation of practices which are unfair and prejudicial to consumer’s interest”.
- For manufacture, selling, storage, distribution, or import of adulterated products, the penalties are:
 - ✓ If injury is not caused to a consumer, fine up to Rs 1 lakh with imprisonment up to six months;
 - ✓ If injury is caused, fine up to Rs 3 lakh with imprisonment up to one year;
 - ✓ If grievous hurt is caused, fine up to Rs 5 lakh with imprisonment up to 7 years;
 - ✓ In case of death, fine of Rs 10 lakh or more with a minimum imprisonment of 7 years, extendable to imprisonment for life.

Issue of Misleading Advertisements:

- Section 21 of the new Act defines the powers given to the CCPA to crack down on false or misleading advertisements. According to these provisions, if the CCPA is satisfied after investigation that any advertisement is false or misleading and is harmful to the interest of any consumer, or is in contravention of consumer rights, the CCPA may issue directions to the trader, manufacturer, endorser, advertiser, or publisher to discontinue such an advertisement, or modify it in a manner specified by the authority, within a given time.
- The authority may also impose a penalty up to Rs 10 lakh, with imprisonment up to two years, on the manufacturer or endorser of false and misleading advertisements. The penalty may go up to Rs 50 lakh, with imprisonment up to five years, for every subsequent offence committed by the same manufacturer or endorser.
- CCPA may ban the endorser of a false or misleading advertisement from making endorsement of any products or services in the future, for a period that may extend to one year. The ban may extend up to three years in every subsequent violation of the Act.

196. Visa Guidelines on Anti-government activities

- There was a recent case is of Polish student Kamil Siedcynski in Kolkata’s Jadavpur University who has been asked to leave India by the MHA after he attended an anti-CAA rally in the city. Days before this, Afsara Anika Meem, a Bangladeshi student of Visva Bharati University, Santiniketan, was asked to depart from the country for indulging in “anti-government” activities. In December last year, Jakob

Lindenthal, a German student at IIT Madras, was sent back to his home country and Norwegian tourist Janne Mette Johannson was questioned by Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO).

India's visa guidelines say on 'anti-government' activities:

- According to visa guidelines laid out by the MHA, foreign nationals shall be required to strictly adhere to the purpose of visit declared while submitting the visa application. However, a foreign national (other than a Pakistani national) coming to India on any type of visa will be allowed to avail activities permitted under tourist visa. However, there are no provisions specified under "anti-government" activities subhead.
- The absence of any such provision in visa laws or Foreigner's Act makes it necessary for the government to define "anti-government" activities under a statute. "Visa laws are not in any derogation with any other law, so inferences can be drawn – which means a court can rule that whatever are defined as "anti-government" activities for Indian national is "anti-government" for foreign national too."

'Anti-government' activities mean for an Indian national:

- According to the lawyers, "anti-government" activities are those which are listed as punishable under Section 124A (sedition) of the Indian Penal Code. Section 124A IPC states: "Whoever, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards, the Government established by law in India, shall be punished with imprisonment for life, to which a fine may be added; or, with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which a fine may be added; or, with fine."

Right to Protest:

- Right to protest peacefully is enshrined under Article 19(1)(a) of Indian Constitution which guarantees the freedom of speech and expression. Article (19)(b) guarantees the citizens of the country the right to assemble peacefully and without arms.

197. Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2019

- On 2nd March, Minister of Human Resource Development Ramesh Pokhriyal 'Nishank' introduced The Central Sanskrit Universities Bill, 2019 in Rajya Sabha. The Bill is intended to convert India's three deemed-to-be Sanskrit universities – (i) Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan, New Delhi, (ii) Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, New Delhi, and (iii) Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, Tirupati – into Central Sanskrit Universities.
- As per PRS Legislative Research, the proposed central universities will: (i) disseminate and advance knowledge for the promotion of Sanskrit, (ii) make special provisions for integrated courses in humanities, social sciences, and science, and (iii) train manpower for the overall development and preservation of Sanskrit and allied subjects.
- The powers and functions shall include: (i) prescribing courses of study and conducting training programmes, (ii) granting degrees, diplomas, and certificates, (iii) providing facilities through a distance education system, (iv) Conferring autonomous status on a college or an institution, (v) providing instructions for education in Sanskrit and allied subjects.

- Like at all central universities, the President of India will be the Visitor of the central Sanskrit universities. He may appoint persons to review and inspect the functioning of the University. The Executive Council may take action based on the findings of the inspection. The various authorities that the University shall have include:
 - ✓ A court, which will review the policies of the university and suggest measures for its development.
 - ✓ An Executive Council, which will be the principal executive body. The 15-member council will include the Vice-Chancellor appointed by the Centre, who will be the chairperson; a joint secretary of the Ministry of Human Resource Development, and two eminent academics from the field of Sanskrit or allied subjects. The council will, among other functions, create teaching and academic posts and their appointment, and manage the revenue and property of the university.
 - ✓ An Academic and Activity Council, which will supervise academic policies.
 - ✓ A Board of Studies, which will approve the subjects for research and recommend measures to improve standards of teaching.

198. Anti-lynching Bill in USA

- On February 28th, US House of Representatives passed an anti-lynching Bill called the Emmett Till Anti lynching Act, which makes lynching a federal hate crime punishable by up to life in prison, a fine or both. Murder used to be an offence usually prosecuted at the state or local level.
- The new law, which will make lynching a federal offence, is the result of a century of efforts in the wake of incidents of lynching in which the victims were primarily African-Americans.
- The House passed the Bill with an overwhelming majority of 410-4. The Senate had passed a version called the Justice for Victims of Lynching Act last year. Once the two Bills are formally reconciled, the legislation can be sent to the Oval Office, where President Trump is expected to sign it into law.
- The Bill notes that between 1882 and 1968, at least 4,700 people, predominantly African-Americans were reported lynched in the US and that 99 per cent of the perpetrators of these lynchings were not punished.

History of anti-lynching legislation:

- 1918, of the more than 200 anti-lynching Bills introduced in the US Congress, none had been passed until the current legislation. The 1918 Bill had been introduced by Representative Leonidas C Dyer, "to protect citizens of the United States against lynching in default of protection by the States". It was Dyer's Bill that provided the blueprint for subsequent anti-lynching measures by National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. However, all such Bills were consistently blocked, shelved or ignored.
- Emmett Till was 14 years old when he was lynched in Mississippi in 1955. Visiting relatives in Mississippi. Till and cousins went to a grocery store where he is said to have whistled at a white woman named Carolyn Bryant. Later, Bryant's husband and brother-in-law kidnapped Till, brutally beat him and shot him.

Anti-lynching bill in India:

- India does not have a central law that deals with the issue of lynchings in the country. In 2018, the Supreme Court condemned the increasing number of incidents of mob lynchings across the country, calling them “horrendous acts of mobocracy” and had then asked Parliament to make lynching a separate offence.
- The 17 July 2018 judgment by an apex court bench, headed by the then CJI Dipak Misra, had issued 11 point guideline for preventive, remedial and punitive measures for the rampant increase in incidents of lynching in India. The guidelines include setting up high level police teams to keep an eye on areas where such incidents are likely to occur.
- So far, three states have given legislative backing to the guidelines issued by the Supreme Court. Manipur was the first state to do so followed by Rajasthan and West Bengal. The Manipur government initially promulgated an ordinance in November 2018 and a few days later the state’s legislature passed the Manipur Protection from Mob Violence Act. Rajasthan and West Bengal have used the Manipur law as a template.
- For example, the Manipur law empowers the state government to impose a collective fine on the inhabitants of an area if the government is satisfied that they are involved in lynching or a connected offence. The Rajasthan law does not have this provision. The two states also differ in their approach to holding police officers responsible for their failure to prevent lynching. Manipur’s law punishes its police officer with one year’s imprisonment while the Rajasthan law does not have a similar provision.
- However, the two states have the same punishment for the act of lynching. They provide that in case of the death of a victim of a lynching, the perpetrators of the crime will be punished with rigorous imprisonment for life. The West Bengal law, on the other hand, provides the death penalty as the maximum punishment for this offence.

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- Emmett Till was 14 years old when he was lynched in Mississippi in 1955. Visiting relatives in Mississippi. Till and cousins went to a grocery store where he is said to have whistled at a white woman named Carolyn Bryant. Later, Bryant's husband and brother-in-law kidnapped Till, brutally beat him and shot him.

Anti-lynching bill in India:

- India does not have a central law that deals with the issue of lynchings in the country. In 2018, the Supreme Court condemned the increasing number of incidents of mob lynchings across the country, calling them “horrendous acts of mobocracy” and had then asked Parliament to make lynching a separate offence. The 17 July 2018 judgment by an apex court bench, headed by the then CJI Dipak Misra, had issued 11 point guideline for preventive, remedial and punitive measures for the rampant increase in incidents of lynching in India. The guidelines include setting up high level police teams to keep an eye on areas where such incidents are likely to occur.
- So far, three states have given legislative backing to the guidelines issued by the Supreme Court. Manipur was the first state to do so followed by Rajasthan and West Bengal. The Manipur government initially promulgated an ordinance in November 2018 and a few days later the state's legislature passed the Manipur Protection from Mob Violence Act. Rajasthan and West Bengal have used the Manipur law as a template.
- For example, the Manipur law empowers the state government to impose a collective fine on the inhabitants of an area if the government is satisfied that they are involved in lynching or a connected offence. The Rajasthan law does not have this provision. The two states also differ in their approach to holding police officers responsible for their failure to prevent lynching. Manipur's law punishes its police officer with one year's imprisonment while the Rajasthan law does not have a similar provision.
- However, the two states have the same punishment for the act of lynching. They provide that in case of the death of a victim of a lynching, the perpetrators of the crime will be punished with rigorous imprisonment for life. The West Bengal law, on the other hand, provides the death penalty as the maximum punishment for this offence.

200. UNHCR approaches Supreme Court

- The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights “intends to file” an Intervention Application in the Supreme Court of India, “seeking to intervene in Writ Petition (Civil) No. 1474 of 2019 and praying that she be allowed to make submissions... as per Order XVII, Rule 3 of the Supreme Court Rules, 2013”. The case is ‘Deb Mukharji & Ors vs Union of India & Ors’, and relates to a challenge to the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019.
- The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN Human Rights) is the leading UN entity on human rights. The General Assembly entrusted both the High Commissioner and her Office with a unique mandate to promote and protect all human rights for all people. High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet Jeria has invoked her “mandate to inter alia protect and promote all human rights and to conduct necessary advocacy in that regard, established pursuant to the United Nations General Assembly resolution 48/141”. This resolution, adopted by the UNGA in 1994, created the post of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

- The application flags some central principles of international human rights law: the impact of the CAA on some migrants; the enjoyment of human rights by all migrants and the rights of all migrants (non-citizens) to equality before the law; and the principle of non-refoulement, which prohibits the forcible return of refugees and asylum seekers to a country where they are likely to be persecuted.

201. Ethnic Violence in Meghalaya

- Meghalaya witnessed a spate of stabbings in the aftermath of CAA. Meghalaya became a state in 1972, when it was carved out of Assam. Before that, Shillong, now Meghalaya's capital, used to be the capital of Assam. Sharing a 443-km border with Bangladesh, Meghalaya has seen decades of migration from areas that are now in Bangladesh, as well as from various Indian states via Assam. Besides the indigenous groups, Meghalaya's residents include Bengalis, Nepalis, Marwaris, Biharis and members of various other communities.
- Meghalaya is a tribal majority state, and the indigenous Khasis, Jaintias and Garos are entitled to 80% reservation in government jobs. Groups such as the Khasi Students' Union (KSU), established in 1978, have continuously expressed concerns that illegal migration from Bangladesh and growth of "outsiders" from other states would overwhelm the indigenous communities.
- The Centre decided the CAA will not apply in Sixth Schedule areas. The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution has special provisions for administration of certain areas in the Northeast, including almost the whole of Meghalaya. Despite the large exemption, the concerns have persisted in Meghalaya, and demands for an Inner Line Permit (ILP) regime have gathered fresh momentum. If the ILP system is introduced, every Indian citizen from any other state would require a time-bound permit to visit Meghalaya.



202. UNDP's Gender Social Norms Index

- What UNDP's Gender Social Norms Index, covering 80% of the world population in 75 countries, tells us about gender inequality worldwide and in India. 86% & 90% of women and men, respectively, held some sort of bias against women (2018), according to UNDP's Gender Social Norms Index; in India (2014-15), this bias showed un 97% of women and 99% of men. 24% of parliamentary seats worldwide are held by women, and there are only 10 female heads of government out of a possible 193.
- This is the first Gender Social Norms Index. UNDP pointed out that 2020 marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (Beijing+25), the most visionary agenda on women's empowerment to date and called on world leaders to accelerate action to meet global targets on gender equality.
- The UN agency is urging governments and institutions to utilize new policies to change these discriminatory beliefs and practices through education, and by raising awareness and changing incentives.

203. Right of Accused to be Defended

- Last month, the Karnataka High Court observed that it is unethical and illegal for lawyers to pass resolutions against representing accused in court. This was after local bar associations had objected to four students arrested for sedition being defended in court.



28%

globally feel it's justified for a man to beat his wife

BIAS AGAINST WOMEN IN INDIA

	AT LEAST ONE BIAS	NO BIAS
Overall (2010-14)	98.28%	1.72%
By women	97.09%	2.9%
By men	99.21%	0.79%

INDIA INDICATORS

Gender inequality rank (2018)	122
Maternal mortality ratio (2015)	174/lakh live births
Seats in Parliament (2018)	11.7%
Secondary education (age 25+), female	39%
Secondary education (age 25+), male	63.5%
Labour force participation, female	23.6%
Labour force participation, male	78.6%

Source: UNDP

- In 2010, a Supreme Court Bench of Justices Markandey Katju and Gyan Sudha Mishra dealt with the illegality of such resolutions in the A S Mohammed Rafi vs State of Tamil Nadu case. The Supreme Court ruled that such resolutions are wholly illegal, against all traditions of the bar and against professional ethics. Further as per the Uttarakhand HC, action under Section 15(2) of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971, can be considered against advocates who interrupt court proceedings.
- The Bar Council of India has Rules on Professional Standards, part of the Standards of Professional Conduct and Etiquette to be followed by lawyers under the Advocates Act. An advocate is bound to accept any brief in the courts or tribunals, at a fee consistent with his standing at the Bar and the nature of the case.
- The Rules provide for a lawyer refusing to accept a particular brief in "special circumstances". Last year, The Uttarakhand High Court clarified that these special circumstances refer to an individual advocate who may choose not to appear in a particular case, but who cannot be prohibited from defending an accused by any threat of removal of his membership of the bar association.

204. Digital Locker service by Postal Department

- For the first time in India, the Department of Posts is starting a free digital parcel locker service that will allow addressees to collect their consignments from specified post offices at their convenience. As a pilot, the service will be launched in Kolkata. It is expected to help the growing population of

migrant professionals who often miss out receiving parcels because they are away at work and have no one at home to receive the consignment on their behalf.

- The free digital parcel locker service that will allow addressees to collect their consignments from specified post offices at their convenience. The addressee will have to give a locker number as the address, upon which India Post will drop the parcel into the locker, which will remain accessible for seven days – any time of the day – through an OTP. The facility will be available, as of now, only for consignments received through registered post or speed post.

205. Supreme Court order on Cryptocurrencies

- On March 4, a three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court of India struck down a 2018 circular of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), which sought to prevent banks and institutions from dealing in “virtual currencies” – also referred to as cryptocurrencies, an example being Bitcoin – and providing services to those engaged in trading in such currencies. The Court order comes seven months after an inter-ministerial committee recommended that cryptocurrencies be banned, proposing instead that an official digital currency be launched in the country.
- It has its origins in the writ petitions filed by the industry body, the Internet and Mobile Association of India, and several crypto exchanges, their shareholders, and traders. They challenged the RBI circular on many counts. Through that circular, the RBI had forbidden banks from extending a range of services to facilitate individuals and entities in dealing with cryptocurrencies.
- The petitioners questioned the RBI’s power in prohibiting trading in virtual currencies; they wondered how the RBI could propose an outright ban when all other stakeholders such as the Department of Economic Affairs, the Securities and Exchange Board of India, Central Board of Direct Taxes, among others, had batted for a regulatory regime.
- Justices Rohinton Nariman, Aniruddha Bose and V. Ramasubramanian set aside the RBI circular of 2018, saying, that the RBI had not found that the activities of virtual currency exchanges had adversely affected the entities it regulated.

206. The Epidemics Diseases Act of 1897

- The Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 was first enacted to tackle bubonic plague in Bombay state in former British India. The law is meant for containment of epidemics by providing special powers that are required for the implementation of containment measures to control the spread of the disease. The Act has been routinely used to contain various diseases in India such as swine flu, cholera, malaria and dengue. In 2018 the Act was enforced as cholera began to spread in a region of Gujarat.
- Following the 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic the Cabinet Secretary of India on 11 March 2020 announced that all states and Union territories should invoke provisions of Section 2 of the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897. The section includes special measures to be taken by the Centre to “prescribe regulations as to dangerous epidemic disease.” It also includes the detention of people or any vessel that come from international shores and are seen potent to spread the epidemic in the country.
- **Section 2 of the Act states:** “When at any time the State Government (now Centre) is satisfied that the State or any part thereof is visited by, or threatened with, an outbreak of any dangerous epidemic disease, the State Government, if it thinks that the ordinary provisions of the law for the time being in

force are insufficient for the purpose, may take, or require or empower any person to take, such measures and, by public notice, prescribe such temporary regulations to be observed by the public or by any person or class of persons as it shall deem necessary to prevent the outbreak of such disease or the spread thereof, and may determine in what manner and by whom any expenses incurred (including compensation if any) shall be defrayed.”

- The provisions of the Act state that the government can fine people or imprison them for violating rules and regulations that will be set to contain the outbreak. Section 3 of the Act states: "Any person disobeying any regulation or order made under this Act shall be deemed to have committed an offence punishable under section 188 of the Indian Penal Code (45 of 1860).
- The law also safeguards officials and gives them overarching superintendence of power who act under the provisions of this law to contain the outbreak. According to Section 4 of the act, no suit or other legal proceedings shall lie against any person for anything done in good faith under the act.

207. Essential Commodities Act

- The Essential Commodities Act is an act of Parliament of India which was established to ensure the delivery of certain commodities or products, the supply of which if obstructed owing to hoarding or blackmarketing would affect the normal life of the people. This includes foodstuff, drugs, fuel (petroleum products) etc.
- The ECA was enacted in 1955. It has since been used by the Government to regulate the production, supply and distribution of a whole host of commodities it declares 'essential' in order to make them available to consumers at fair prices. Additionally, the government can also fix the maximum retail price (MRP) of any packaged product that it declares an “essential commodity”.
- The list of items under the Act include drugs, fertilisers, pulses and edible oils, and petroleum and petroleum products.
- The Centre can include new commodities as and when the need arises, and take them off the list once the situation improves.
- The Union Government on 14 March 2020 brought masks and hand-sanitisers under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 to make sure that these products, key for preventing the spread of Covid-19 infection, are available to people at the right price and in the right quality

Working of the Act:

- If the Centre finds that a certain commodity is in short supply and its price is spiking, it can notify stock-holding limits on it for a specified period. The States act on this notification to specify limits and take steps to ensure that these are adhered to. Anybody trading or dealing in the commodity, be it wholesalers, retailers or even importers are prevented from stockpiling it beyond a certain quantity.
- A State can, however, choose not to impose any restrictions. But once it does, traders have to immediately sell into the market any stocks held beyond the mandated quantity. This improves supplies and brings down prices. As not all shopkeepers and traders comply, State agencies conduct raids to get everyone to toe the line and the errant are punished. The excess stocks are auctioned or sold through fair price shops.

208. Introduction of Private Trains

- The committee chaired by Sh. Bibek Debroy had inter-alia recommended concessioning of commercial operation of train service like Rajdhani/Shatabdi to private parties. Railways have planned to introduce 150 passenger trains through private operators in PPP mode. In this regard, a group of secretaries (GoS) has been constituted in the year 2019, with a term of one year, inter-alia, to advise on the terms and conditions for private passenger train operator to operate trains with world class technology covering the Indian Railways network through PPP mode.
- The draft Request for Qualification and the draft Concession Agreement documents have been uploaded on the website of NITI Ayog and Indian Railways for seeking feedback from the stake holders. “Tejas” train, run by Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC), have been introduced on two routes namely Delhi-Lucknow and Mumbai-Ahmedabad.
- Government has notified the resolution for setting up of Rail Development Authority(RDA). RDA has been envisaged as an advisory/recommendatory body. The role/mandate of RDA inter-alia includes providing expert advice to Government to make informed decision on following issues:-
 1. Pricing of services commensurate with costs;
 2. Measures for enhancement of non-fare revenue;
 3. Protection of consumer interests, by ensuring quality of service and cost optimization;
 4. Promoting competition, efficiency and economy;
 5. Encouraging market development and participation of stakeholders in the rail sector and for ensuring a fair deal to the stakeholders and customers;
 6. Creating positive environment for investment;
 7. Promoting efficient allocation of resources in the sector;
 8. Benchmarking of service standards against international norms and specify and enforce standards with respect to the quality, continuity and reliability of services provided by them;
 9. Providing framework for non-discriminatory open access to the Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) infrastructure and others in future;
 10. Measures to absorb new technologies for achieving desired efficiency and performance standards; and
 11. Measures for human resource development to achieve any of its stated objectives.

209. Bibek Debroy Committee Report 2015

- The Railway Board had constituted a Committee for mobilization of resources for major railway projects and restructuring of Railway Ministry and Railway Board (Chair: Mr. Bibek Debroy). The Committee was constituted on September 22, 2014 to prepare a blueprint for reforming Indian Railways. The Committee submitted its final report in June 2015. Its mains recommendations included:

- **Failure of private participation:** One of the key reasons for the failure of private participation in Railways is that policy making, the regulatory function, and operations are all vested within the same organisation, that is, the Ministry of Railways.
- The Committee recommends that the three roles must be separated from each other to have sustained and large scale private participation. Railways' monopoly discourages private sector entry into the market. Secondly, schemes for private sector participation are not prepared with the involvement of stakeholders. Thirdly, the schemes are designed such that the risk lies mostly with the private parties.
- **Need for an independent regulator:** In order to create a level playing field for private players in the sector, the Committee recommends setting up an independent regulator, the Railways Regulatory Authority.
- The regulator will be a statutory body, with an independent budget and independent of the Ministry. While it will not determine tariff, it will monitor whether the tariff is market determined and competitive. An independent regulator for Railways is also necessary because of the technical and specialized nature of the sector.
- **Restructuring of zones:** Indian Railways has 17 zones, which are further divided into 68 divisions. The present zones have developed historically and not from a specific strategy. Hence, there is a need to restructure the organisation's zones and divisions.
- **Financing issues:** Financing of Railways is a challenge because: (i) investment is made in projects that do not have traffic and hence do not generate revenue, (ii) the unbalanced mix of passenger and freight traffic does not help generate revenue, (iii) the efficiency improvements do not result in increasing revenue, and (iv) delays in projects results in cost escalation, which makes it difficult to recover costs. Railways has also been mostly financed through internal resources and budgetary support, and not through external resources. Thus there has been no financial oversight of its projects.
- **Focus on core activities:** The Committee has observed that, apart from its core function of running trains, Railways also engages in peripheral activities such as running schools, hospitals and a police force. It is expected that these various zones and divisions within the Railways will face increasing competition in the future.
- To enable themselves to compete effectively, they will need to reduce costs on these non-core activities that are non-remunerative in nature, and instead improve the efficiency of running trains by greater resource allocation to this function. Non-core activities can be outsourced to private entities.
- An example cited by the Committee is that of subsidization of education and medical facilities in alternative schools and hospitals respectively, including the private institutions.
- **Accounting reforms:** The current accounting system does not provide details of the cost of various activities and services, such as introduction of new trains and scheduling of stops. It neither tracks assets nor assesses liabilities. Consequently, it becomes difficult to compute the costs and benefits of any project or activity. In this regard, the Committee recommends switching to a commercial accrual-based double entry accounting system. This will clearly distinguish between revenue and capital expenditures and present a complete picture of debt and other liabilities. Additionally, it will help determine how much it costs to run a train and whether it is viable to run it.

210. The Mineral Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2020

- Parliament recently passed the Mineral Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2020, amending the Mines & Mineral (Development and Regulation) Act 1957 and The Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015.
- Provisions of the Bill:
 - ✓ The amended provisions clearly provide that companies which do not possess any prior coal mining experience in India and/or have mining experience in other minerals or in other countries can participate in auction of coal/lignite blocks. This will not only increase participation in coal/lignite block auctions, but also facilitate the implementation of FDI policy in the coal sector.
 - ✓ Now, the companies which are not 'engaged in specified end-use' can also participate in auctions of Schedule II and III coal mines. The removal of the end use restriction would allow wider participation in auction of coal mines for a variety of purposes such as own consumption, sale or for any other purpose, as may be specified by the Central Government.
 - ✓ The Bill also allows prospecting licence-cum-mining lease (PL-cum-ML) for coal/lignite which increases the availability of coal & lignite blocks, and coal blocks of varying grades in a wide geographical distribution will be available for allocation.
 - ✓ The successful bidders/allottees have now been entitled to utilize mined coal in any of its plants or plants of its subsidiary or holding company. Amendments also provide for allocation of the coal mine to the next successful bidder or allottee, subsequent to termination of its allocation along with the matters incidental to it. A provision has also been made for appointment of designated custodian for management of the mines, apart from Schedule II mines, which have come under production and whose vesting/ allotment order has been cancelled.
 - ✓ With the amendments, environment and forest clearances along with other approvals and clearances shall automatically get transferred to the new owners of mineral blocks for a period of two years from the date of grant of new lease. This will allow new owners to continue with hassle free mining operations. During the period, they may apply for the fresh licence beyond the period of two years.
- The auction of lease of mines can now be started before expiry of lease period. It will enable the state government to take advance action for auction of mineral blocks so that the new lease holder could be decided before the existing lease gets expired. This will help in seamless production of minerals in the country.
- The new provisions will also augment the exploration of the deep seated minerals and minerals of national interest by allowing Non Exclusive Reconnaissance Permit (NERP) holders to apply for composite licence or Mining Lease (PL-cum-ML). Various repetitive and redundant provisions of MMDR Act and CMSP Act have also been omitted for Ease of Doing Business..

211. Nomination In Rajya Sabha

- While pitching in favour of making a provision in the Constitution for nomination of eminent people to the Council of States, N Gopalaswami Ayyangar, who was part of the Constitution drafting committee stated the reason to be inclusion of "seasoned people who may not be in the thickest of

the political fray, but who might be willing to participate in the debate with an amount of learning and importance which we do not ordinarily associate with the House of the People.”

- The first list of 12 Presidential nominees perfectly represented this sentiment: Zakir Husain, who later became the President; historians Kalidas Nag and Radha Kumud Mookerji; Hindi poet Maithilisharan Gupt; Gandhian author Kakasaheb Kalelkar; scientist Satyendranath Bose; social worker N R Malkani; danseuse Rukmini Devi Arundale; Gandhian scholar J M Kumarappa; jurist Alladi Krishnaswami; actor Prithviraj Kapoor; and medical scientist Major General S S Sokhey.
- **Article 80 of the Constitution** states, “(1) The council of States shall consist of (a) twelve members to be nominated by the President in accordance with the provisions of clause (3)...” Clause (3) states, “The members to be nominated by the President under sub clause (a) of clause (1) shall consist of persons having **special knowledge or practical experience in respect of such matters as the following, namely: Literature, science, art and social service**”. Since Rajya Sabha was constituted in 1952, 137 people have been nominated as its members. These include scholars, jurists, educationists, historians, scientists, litterateurs, journalists, engineers, economists, administrators, artistes, social workers and politicians usually with loyalty to the government of the day.
- Presidential nominees in the present Rajya Sabha are Swapan Dasgupta, Subramanian Swamy, Narendra Jadhav, Suresh Gopi, Mary Kom, Chhatrapati Sambhajiraje, Roopa Ganguly (all nominated in 2016), Rakesh Sinha, Sonal Mansingh, and Raghunath Mohapatra (all 2018). Former CJI Ranjan Gogoi is the latest in that list which led to much debate and discussion.
- While retired judges of the Supreme Court are prohibited from pleading or acting in any Court or before any authority within the territory of India, there are no provisions curtailing employment under government after retirement.

212. Updation of National Population Register:

- The Updation of the NPR was due to begin on April 1, which will be delayed due to the outbreak of coronavirus. The Odisha CM wrote to the PM requesting postponement if the NPR exercise as the state machinery would be busy combating the COVID 19.
- Sources said there were practical difficulties too as some states had not been able to complete the NPR and House listing Census training for enumerators due to COVID-19. There is hardly any time left now, with lockdown declared till March 31. Both the NPR as well as Census 2021 will now be postponed due to the health crisis.
- According to government sources, the census and Updation of NPR were scheduled from April 1 to September 30 for which all preparations were done, but due to lockdown now, the government will allow new dates or extend the period. The decennial census exercise will be conducted in two phases – House Listing and Housing Census from April to September 2020 and Population Enumeration from February 9 to February 28, 2021.

What is the difference between NPR and Census?

- The population census is carried out by the Government of India once every ten years. The process began for the first time in 1872 when India was still under colonial rule.
- The Census is carried out under the **Census Act, 1948**.

CENSUS	Vs	NPR
Census Act, 1948	Legal Origin	Citizenship Rules, 2003
Assesment, Policy and Planning	Purpose	Creating NRIC
Literacy, Migration, Employment, Income	Information	Birth details of parents and documents
Anonymous and Confidential	Data Privacy	Not Confidential
No punishment for non-disclosure	Punishment	Punishment for non-disclosure

- The data collected for Census gives a demographic and socio-economic picture of the population of the country.
- The purpose of collecting and analysing Census data is that it informs planning and policy, and helps in assessing the impact of existing government policies.
- As opposed to this, the exercise of creating and maintaining a National Population Register began in the year 2010. NPR is conducted under the **Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003** issued following the 2003 amendment to the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- The sole purpose of compiling the NPR is to create NRIC. The data collected during NPR is used for determining citizenship during verification.
- The Census questions aim at getting details on literacy, employment, residence, migration, marriage, income etc.
- The NPR information includes demographic as well as biometric details. Apart from details of birth, the new NPR form also seeks details such as AADHAR card number, Passport, PAN card number, and Voter-ID. While the Census Act makes it compulsory for the government to keep the data collected during census confidential and anonymous.
- (The Census Act punishes government officials if the data collected during Census is mishandled or made public.) **There is no such requirement of confidentiality for NPR data under the citizenship rules**

213. Section 188 of IPC

- Amid lockdown, the orders have been framed under the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897, which lays down punishment as per Section 188 of the Indian Penal Code, 1860, for flouting such orders– which can lead to imprisonment of up to 6 months or fine up to Rs 1000 or both. **Section 188, which comes under the Code's Chapter X, 'Of Contempts of the Lawful Authority of Public Servants', reads:**

“Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant.—

- Whoever, knowing that, by an order promulgated by a public servant lawfully empowered to promulgate such order, he is directed to abstain from a certain act, or to take certain order with

certain property in his possession or under his management, disobeys such direction, shall, if such disobedience causes or tends to cause obstruction, annoyance or injury, or risk of obstruction, annoyance or injury, to any persons lawfully employed, be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to one month or with fine which may extend to two hundred rupees, or with both;

- and if such disobedience causes or tends to cause danger to human life, health or safety, or causes or tends to cause a riot or affray, shall be punished with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to six months, or with fine which may extend to one thousand rupees, or with both.”
- **Explanation.**—It is not necessary that the offender should intend to produce harm, or contemplate his disobedience as likely to produce harm. It is sufficient that he knows of the order which he disobeys, and that his disobedience produces, or is likely to produce, harm. Importantly, to be charged under the section:
 1. There must be evidence that the accused had knowledge of the order with the disobedience of which he is charged.
 2. Mere disobedience of the order does not constitute an offence in itself, it must be shown that the disobedience has or tends to a certain consequence.
 3. The order has to be for public purposes by public functionaries. An order commanding an assembly of five or more persons to disperse is held to be a valid order under Section 188.

214. Guidelines for Victims of Humanitarian Crisis

- As the coronavirus outbreak continues to spread, those affected by humanitarian crises, such as the people living in camps and camp-like settings are especially vulnerable. On March 17, guidelines developed jointly by the WHO, UNHRC, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) mentioned that this set of people may find it more difficult to access healthcare facilities that are otherwise available to the general population.
- These set of guidelines are meant for those people who are internally displaced, members of host communities, asylum seekers, refugees and migrants. As per the guidelines, in case a COVID-19 case is confirmed at a collective site, the patient's contacts need to be identified and monitored for a period of 14 days, even when quarantining them or isolating them is not possible.
- The guidelines have also urged Community-based surveillance (CBS), wherein site residents and members of the host communities take an active part in helping with the early detection of COVID-19.
- Significantly, the guidelines state that health screenings should not depend on checking the temperature alone, but should be comprehensive and include diagnostics and initial clinical management. For every collective site and its surrounding host community, an equipped referral laboratory needs to be identified. For safe specimen collection and transportation, national protocols need to be followed.

215. Trust Vote in Madhya Pradesh

- Shivraj Singh Chouhan, who took oath as Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister on Monday, won a confidence motion in the state assembly and thus proved the BJP government's majority in the

House. Article 75 of the Constitution says that the council of ministers shall be collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha.

- A no-confidence motion can be moved by any member of the House. It can be moved only in the Lok Sabha and not Rajya Sabha. Rule 198 of the Rules of Procedure and conduct of Lok Sabha specifies the procedure for moving a no-confidence motion. The member need not give a reason for moving the no-confidence motion.
- The member has to give a written notice of the motion before 10 am which will be read out by the Speaker in the House. A minimum of 50 members have to accept the motion and accordingly, the Speaker will announce the date for discussion for the motion. The allotted date has to be within 10 days from the day the motion is accepted. Otherwise, the motion fails and the member who moved the motion will be informed about it.
- A no-confidence motion is slightly different from a motion of confidence, or trust vote, which is moved by the government, as an ordinary motion under Rule 184. A government can prove its majority by moving a confidence motion as a counter to the opposition parties.
- The Prime Minister and Council of Ministers can only hold office if they have the confidence of the Lok Sabha. If they fail to do so, then they are obliged to resign.
- The Prime Minister may also suggest dissolving the House before the vote on either a confidence or a no-confidence motion. Once a motion of no-confidence has been defeated, the same can't be raised for another 6 months.