

**NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION,
EMPOWERMENT ETC****Delhi government launches Zero Fatality Corridor**

The Delhi state govt has launched the 'Zero Fatality Corridor' (ZFC) to assess the cause for crashes on the stretch in the Capital.

Zero Fatality Corridor (ZFC)

- ZFC is to be run in partnership with SaveLIFE Foundation, a leading road safety non-profit organization.
- The initiative is aimed at bringing down injuries and deaths due to road crashes.
- It is in line with Delhi government's plan of action to reduce fatalities due to road crashes by 30 per cent by 2020.
- Through the 'Zero Fatality Corridor' pilot project the aim is to reduce the fatalities to near zero levels on this particular stretch.
- After evaluating the impact of the initiative, the model will be replicated in other parts of the city.

Background:

- As many as 1690 people were killed, and 6086 people were injured in 6515 road crashes in 2018, according to Delhi traffic police.
- The ZFC model of the non-profit is known for reducing road crash deaths by 30% on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway.
- It reduces deaths through a 360-degree intervention, road engineering, police enforcement, rapid emergency care and road-user engagement.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**Taliban reconciliation process**

Recently, a two-day 'intra-Afghan' dialogue of Afghan leaders and the Taliban was held in Moscow without including the ruling Ghani government. Also US announced that it is pulling its military troops out of Afghanistan. A framework deal has been concluded between the US and Afghan Taliban after discussions at Doha.

U.S and Russia's stand :

- Talks facilitated by Russia with mainstream Afghan politicians sitting around the table with Taliban leaders are similar in their approach to the recent U.S.-Taliban talks in Qatar.
- The U.S. and Russia have accepted the idea that peace in Afghanistan is not possible without major concessions to the Taliban and a cessation of violence.
- The U.S. and Russia have agreed to sidestep the Ashraf Ghani regime in Kabul and accepted the Taliban's condition that it will not negotiate with the elected Afghan government at this stage.
- And both the Russian and U.S. processes are dependent on cooperation from Pakistan as it retains its influence over the Taliban leadership.

How different is the present Taliban reconciliation process?

- The current talks with the Taliban are not agreed to by all stakeholders.
- This process is not Afghan-led, owned or controlled.
- The Taliban has not abjured violence or sworn allegiance to the Afghan constitution before joining talks.
- The Taliban has unequivocally renounced ties with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State and committed to preventing Afghan soil from being used by foreign terrorists.

Implications for India:

- India finds itself marginalized in negotiations involving the key regional players.
- Iran and Russia being India's closest allies during the battle against the Taliban regime in the 1990s are out of sync with India's interests.
- India is concerned about the vital role being given to Pakistan. Taliban's policies are too heavily governed by Pakistan. India lacks access and equity with the Taliban. Pakistan's

security establishment will project a potential American exit from Afghanistan as a victory of its policies.

- Taliban might impinge on security scenario in India's troubled Kashmir Valley. The outfit can emerge as the ideological bulwark of Kashmir's renewed insurgency.

India's role in this process:

- India's principled position is not to directly talk to the Taliban until it engages the Afghan government. India needs to stay abreast of all negotiations and should not cut out of the resolution process.
- India cannot send troops to Afghanistan since there is a domestic consensus against it. A channel needs to be opened up between Indian intelligence agencies and all-important groups in Afghanistan including the Taliban.
- India has to ensure that its interests, development projects and citizens are kept secure. India must intensify its dialogue with regional and global stakeholders.
- India's biggest asset is the goodwill India has in the Afghan mind. The Taliban recognizes India's goodwill. Taliban supports Chabahar and other Indian projects.
- India must engage Afghanistan through SAARC and evolve a policy for post-U.S. pullout. Any dialogue with the Taliban must not come at the cost of constitutional democracy, the rule of law and securing the rights of women and minorities.

INDIAN ECONOMY

National Institutes of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management Bill, 2019

The Union Cabinet has approved the introduction of National Institutes of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management Bill, 2019.

The objective of the bill is to confer the status of Institutions of National Importance to National Institute of Food Technology, Entrepreneurship and Management (NIFTEM) at Kundli, Haryana, and the Indian Institute of Food Processing Technology (IIFPT) at Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu.

Benefits:

- The legislation would provide for functional autonomy to the institutes to design and develop courses, undertake research activities and leverage enhanced status in their academic pursuits, so that they become world class institutes.
- The institutes would implement the reservation policy of the Government and would also undertake special outreach activities for the benefits of concerned stakeholders.
- It would enable the institutes to provide world class teaching and research experience by adopting innovative practices.

A unified authority for regulating all financial services in IFSCs

The Union Cabinet has approved establishment of a unified authority for regulating all financial services in International Financial Services Centres (IFSCs) in India through International Financial Services Centres Authority Bill, 2019. The first IFSC in India has been set up at GIFT City, Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

Need for and the benefits of a unified authority:

- Currently, the banking, capital markets and insurance sectors in IFSC are regulated by multiple regulators, i.e. RBI, SEBI and IRDAI.
- The dynamic nature of business in the IFSCs necessitates a high degree of inter-regulatory coordination. It also requires regular clarifications and frequent amendments in the existing regulations governing financial activities in IFSCs.
- The development of financial services and products in IFSCs would require focussed and dedicated regulatory interventions.
- Therefore, a unified financial regulator for IFSCs in India would provide world class regulatory environment to financial market participants. This also be essential from an ease of doing business perspective.
- The unified authority would also provide the much needed impetus to further development of IFSC in India in-sync with the global best practices.

Functions of the Authority:

- regulate all such financial services, financial products and FIs in an IFSC which has already been permitted by the Financial Sector Regulators for IFSCs.
- regulate such other financial products, financial services or FIs as may be notified by the Central Government from time to time.
- recommend to the Central Government such other financial products, financial services and financial institutions which may be permitted in the IFSCs.

Powers of the Authority: All powers exercisable by the respective financial sector regulatory (viz. RBI, SEBI, IRDAI, and PFRDA etc.) under the respective Acts shall be solely exercised by the Authority in the IFSCs in so far as the regulation of financial products, financial services and FIs that are permitted in the IFSC are concerned.

Approval for Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund (AMIF)

The Cabinet Committee of Economic Affairs has given its approval for the creation of a corpus of Rs. 2000 crore for Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund (AMIF).

Agri-Market Infrastructure Fund (AMIF):

- The fund will be created with NABARD for development and up-gradation of agricultural marketing infrastructure in Gramin Agricultural Markets and Regulated Wholesale Markets.
- AMIF will provide the State/UT Governments subsidized loan for their proposal for developing marketing infrastructure in 585 Agriculture Produce Market Committees (APMCs) and 10,000 Grameen Agricultural Markets (GrAMs).
- States may also access AMIF for innovative integrated market infrastructure projects including Hub and Spoke mode and in Public Private Partnership mode.

**SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE
ETC****Hera mission**

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

- Didymoon was chosen because of its close proximity to Earth and its size. Didymoon is small and in a tight enough 12-hour orbit around its parent, that its orbital period can indeed be shifted in a measurable way.
- Didymos is a binary asteroid; the primary body has a diameter of around 780 m and a rotation period of 2.26 hours, whereas the Didymoon secondary body has a diameter of around 160 m and rotates around the primary at a distance of around 1.2 km from the primary surface in around 12 hours.

Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART):

- On the sidelines, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) in USA will also launch the Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) between 2020 and 2021, which will target Didymoon as part of its planetary defence programme.
- The programme, designed to protect Earth from dangerous comets and asteroids, aims to crash DART into Didymoon in 2022 to alter its orbit around Didymos.
- DART will deliberately crash itself into the moonlet at a speed of approximately 6 km per second, using an onboard camera and autonomous navigation software.
- The collision will change the speed of the moonlet in its orbit around the main body. Following the collision, Hera would explore the asteroid in 2026 and check the impact and deflection created by DART.