

CURRENT AFFAIRS

**MONTH OF
MAY-2019**



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Daily Current Affairs for UPSC IAS Preparation

01.05.2019

1. Aspergillus Fungus: Destroyer of polythene

- The Researchers from Pune University have identified *Aspergillus terreus* strain fungi from mangrove rhizosphere soil (root soil where microorganisms colonise) which can potentially help degrade polythene and reduce plastic pollution.
- Fungi are said to be grand recyclers of the planet and are considered vanguard species in habitat restoration.
- The plastic degradation fungi are identified from mangrove rhizosphere soil from 12 different locations in five coastal states Kerala, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Goa and Gujarat.

Related Information

- Polythene contributes to around 64 percent of the total plastic waste and takes about 1,000 years to degrade under natural environmental conditions.
- Despite a ban, single-use polythene bags are still being used widely and are accumulating at dumping sites.
- Available options for polythene disposal such as incineration are harmful to the environment.
- Biodegradation or degradation using microbes is considered suitable and eco-friendly.

Note:

- This year the theme of the World Environment Day 2018 is "Beat Plastic Pollution"

Topic-GS Paper 3–Environment & Biodiversity

Source- Down to Earth

2. Yeti footprints

- The Indian Army claimed that it had discovered "mysterious footprints" of a Yeti, a mythical creature of folklore in Nepal.

Related Information

Yeti

- In the folklore of Nepal, the Yeti or Abominable Snowman is an ape-like creature taller than an average human.

- They said to inhabit the Himalayas, Siberia, Central and East Asia.
- It is also commonly referred to as Meh-Teh (man-bear) and Kang-mi (snowman).
- The scientific community has generally regarded the Yeti as a legend, given the lack of evidence of its existence.
- In one genetic study, researchers matched DNA from hair samples found in the Himalaya with a prehistoric bear from the Pleistocene epoch.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- Indian Express

3. UNESCO Creative Cities Network

- A workshop was held at Srinagar's Institute of Hotel Management for promoting the city's art and craft.
- The event was a step towards preparing a dossier for Srinagar's inclusion in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) as a city of Crafts and Folk Art.
- Jammu and Kashmir does not have any site or monument with the UNESCO inscription of a World Heritage

Related Information

UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN)

- It is a project of UNESCO launched in 2004 to promote cooperation among cities which recognized creativity as a major factor in their urban development.
- The network aims to foster mutual international cooperation with and between member cities committed to investing in creativity as a driver for sustainable urban development, social inclusion and cultural vibrancy.
- The Network recognizes the following creative fields:
 - (a) Crafts and Folk Arts
 - (b) Media Arts
 - (c) Film
 - (d) Design
 - (e) Literature

- (f) Music
- (g) Gastronomy

- The Network recognizes the concept of creative tourism, defined as a travel associated with creative experience and participation
- Indian Cities added to UCCN.
 - Varanasi for Music
 - Chennai for Music
 - Jaipur for Crafts and Folk Art

Note:

- To become part of the network of 180 cities, where development is believed to be intricately linked to their creative traditions.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- TOI

4. India's military spending up by 3.1% and Pakistan's 11% in 2018

- World's military expenditure increased by 2.6 per cent, reaching \$1822 billion in 2018 with India along with United States, China, Saudi Arabia and France contributing 60 percent of the amount, according to the latest report from the SIPRI.
- India's military spending went up by 3.1 per cent to \$66.5 billion while Pakistan's grew by 11 per cent to reach \$11.4 billion.
- The spending by the US increased for the first time since 2010 and that of China went up for the 24th consecutive year.
- The global military spending is 2.1 per cent of the world GDP.
- In India, the defence budget has remained less than 2 per cent of the GDP

Related Information

SIPRI (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute)

- SIPRI is an international institute, dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.
- It was established in 1966.
- It is based in Stockholm, Sweden.
- SIPRI provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

Topic-

Source- Economic Times

5. Madras HC suggestion to amend the POCSO Act

- Child rights and anti-trafficking activists have welcomed the observations made by the Madras High Court.
- Madras High Court made two significant suggestions:
 - (a) The definition of 'Child' under Section 2(d) of the POCSO Act can be redefined as 16 instead of 18.
 - (b) Any consensual sex after the age of 16 or bodily contact or allied acts can be excluded from the rigorous provisions of the POCSO Act and such sexual assault, if it is so defined can be tried under the more liberal provision, which can be introduced in the Act itself.

How does it help?

- The amendment is suggested in order to distinguish the cases of the teenage relationship after 16 years, from the cases of sexual assault on children below 16 years.
- The effect that the age of the offender ought not to be more than five years or so than the consensual victim girl of 16 years or more.
- So that the impressionable age of the victim girl cannot be taken advantage of by a person who is much older and crossed the age of presumable infatuation or innocence.

Related Information

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012

- The POCSO Act, 2012 was enacted to Protect the Children from Offences of Sexual Assault, Sexual harassment and pornography with due regard for safeguarding the interest and well-being of children.
- The Act defines a child as any person below eighteen years of age and regards the best interests and welfare of the child as a matter of paramount importance at every stage, to ensure the healthy physical, emotional, intellectual and social development of the child.

- The Act defines different forms of sexual abuse, including penetrative and non-penetrative assault, as well as sexual harassment and pornography.
- The Act deems a sexual assault to be “aggravated” under certain circumstances, such as when the abused child is mentally ill or when the abuse is committed by a person in a position of trust or authority like a family member, police officer, teacher, or doctor.
- The Act also casts the police in the role of child protectors during the investigative process.
- The Act stipulates that a case of child sexual abuse must be disposed of within one year from the date the offence is reported.

Note:

POCSO e-Box

- It is an initiative of the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) which provided an online complaint box for reporting child sexual abuse.
- It was launched in 2016.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important Act

Source- Indian Express

6. Dissolution of Lok Sabha

- In India, the Lok Sabha has a five-year term but can be dissolved earlier.
- According to Article 83(2) of the Constitution, completion of five years from the first day of its meeting amounts to the dissolution of the Lower House.
- In this case, an election is held to elect the new Members of Parliament.
- The Lower House can also be dissolved earlier by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister.
- It can also be dissolved if the President feels that no viable government can be formed after the resignation or fall of a regime.
- Similarly, Article 172 of the Constitution requires that the state legislatures continue for five years unless dissolved earlier.

Effects on the Bill

- A bill pending in the Lok Sabha lapses (whether originating in the Lok Sabha or transmitted to it by the Rajya Sabha).
- A bill passed by the Lok Sabha but pending in the Rajya Sabha lapses.
- A bill not passed by the two Houses due to disagreement and if the president has notified the holding of a joint sitting before the dissolution of Lok Sabha, does not lapse.
- A bill pending in the Rajya Sabha but not passed by the Lok Sabha does not lapse.
- A bill passed by both Houses but pending assent of the president does not lapse.
- A bill passed by both Houses but returned by the president for reconsideration of Houses does not lapse.

Note:

- Rajya Sabha is a permanent House and is not subject to dissolution.
- However, one-third Members of Rajya Sabha retire after every second year.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Polity and Governance

Source- The Hindu

7. Goldman Environmental Prize, 2019

- Six people from around the world have been selected for the award of Goldman Environmental Prize 2019.

Goldman Environmental Prize

- It is a prize awarded annually to grassroots environmental activists.
- The objective of the award is to honour those grassroots environmentalists who risk their lives to protect the environment and empower those people who have the most to lose from industrial projects.
- The award is given by the Goldman Environmental Foundation headquartered in San Francisco, California.
- It is also called the Green Nobel.
- The Goldman Environmental Prize is awarded to one from each of the world's six geographic regions which are Africa, Asia, Europe, Islands and Island Nations, North America and South and Central America.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

8. Researchers identify climate change-resilient chickpea genes

- The researcher from Hyderabad-based International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) discovered important factors for heat and drought tolerance in chickpea.
- The identified genes can help the crop tolerate temperatures up to 38 degree Celsius.

Related Information

- Chickpea is an important Rabi crop (a legume crop) in South Asia, which accounts for around 90 per cent of the global chickpea cultivation.
- However, drought and rising temperatures cause more than 70 per cent yield loss in chickpea worldwide.

ICRISAT

- It is a non-profit, non-political organization that conducts agricultural research for development in the drylands of Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.
- It's headquartered in Hyderabad, Telangana.
- Currently, they conduct research on six highly nutritious drought-tolerant crops, also known as Smart Food: Chickpea, Pigeon pea, Pearl Millet, Finger Millet, Sorghum, and Groundnut.

Note: Smart Food is food that is defined as good for the consumer, the planet and the farmer, and is one of the solutions that contribute to addressing all these issues in unison.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- Down to Earth

02.05.2019

1. UN Security Council designates Masood Azhar as a global terrorist

- Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar was listed as a designated terrorist by the UN Security Council 1267 Committee.

Why the issue is important for India?

- India blamed Jaish for the attack on the Indian Air Force base in Pathankot on January 2, 2016 hence India put forward a proposal in February 2016 to designate Azhar as a terrorist under the aegis of the UNSC 1267 committee.

Related Information

About the UN Security Council 1267 Committee

- The UNSC resolution 1267 was adopted unanimously on October 15, 1999.
- It is a consolidated list of people and entities it has determined as being associated with Al Qaeda or the Taliban.
- For listing the people in list, laws must be passed within each member nation to implement the sanctions.

United Nations Security Council

- The United Nations Security Council is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations.
- It charged with ensuring international peace and security, accepting new members to the United Nations and approving any changes to its charter.
- Its powers include the establishment of peacekeeping operations and international sanctions as well as the authorization of military actions through resolutions.
- It is the only body of the United Nations with the authority to issue binding resolutions to member states.
- It has 15 members in which 5 are Permanent members and 10 are Non-permanent members.

Other Principal Organs of the UN:

- United Nations Secretariat
- United Nations General Assembly
- International Court of Justice
- United Nations Security Council
- United Nations Economic and Social Council
- United Nations Trusteeship Council

Topic-GS Paper 2 –International Organisation

Source- The Hindu

2. Iraq remains top oil supplier to India

- According to data sourced from the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics, Iraq remains the top oil supplier to India during 2018-19 fiscal year.

Related Information

About Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics

- The Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics worked under the Ministry of Commerce, Government of India.
- It is the pioneer official organization for collection, compilation and dissemination of India's Trade Statistics and Commercial Information.
- The office is located at Kolkata, is headed by the Director General

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Important Institution

Source- The Hindu

3. Beluga whale

- Recently the Beluga whale / white whale found frolicking in the frigid harbour of Tufjord, a hamlet near Norway's northernmost point.

Related Information

About Beluga whale

- It is also known as the white whale, as it is the only marine mammal of this colour.
- They are the aquatic mammal found in the Arctic and sub-Arctic region.
- It possesses a distinctive protuberance at the front of its head which houses an echolocation organ called the melon, which in this species is large and deformable.
- They are listed as Least Concern in IUCN Red List.

Note:

Recently Japan withdraws from International Whaling Commission which is an international body set up by the terms of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment and Biodiversity

Source- Indian Express

4. ICAT - A World Class Automotive Testing Centre

- The International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT) which is a world-class automotive testing centre is now open in Manesar, Chennai under the aegis of NATRiP.

Related Information

About National Automotive Testing and R&D Infrastructure Project

- It is the largest and one of the most significant initiatives of Government of India in the Automotive sector.
- The Project aims to create a testing, validation and R&D infrastructure for the Automotive sector in India.
- It also facilitates seamless integration of Indian Automotive industry with the world as also to position the country prominently on the global automotive map.
- The automotive industry is the sunshine industry in India contributing to over 7.5% to the country's GDP.
- It is Under the Ministry of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Polity and Governance

Source-PIB

5. Koonthankulam Bird Sanctuary

- Recently 68 painted stork carcasses buried including 65 juveniles at Koonthankulam birds' sanctuary where sudden thunderstorm damaged nests atop trees from where the birds fell down and died.

Related Information

About Painted Stork

- The Painted Stork is a large wading bird in the stork family.
- It is found in the wetlands of the plains of tropical Asia south of the Himalayas in South Asia and extending into Southeast Asia.
- They are listed as Near Threatened in the IUCN Red List.

About Koonthankulam Bird Sanctuary

- It is a protected area declared as a Bird sanctuary in 1994.
- It is located in the Tirunelveli district of Tamil Nadu.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment and Biodiversity

Source- TOI

6. GSTN to sign MoU with CBDT for sharing data to prevent anomalies

- The Central Board of Direct Taxes has decided to enter into a memorandum of understanding with GST Network.

Highlights of MoU

- The MoU will allow income tax department to share details including sales and profits that businesses have reported in their income tax returns with GSTN to scale up scrutiny and check tax evasion.
- This move will allow direct and indirect tax authorities to zero in on discrepancies in the information that business have disclosed in their respective tax return forms and arrest tax evaders.
- The MoU will also include modalities of exchange of data, maintenance of confidentiality and mechanism for safe preservation of data.

Related Information

About Central Board of Direct Taxes

- It is a statutory authority that functions under the Central Board of Revenue Act, 1963.
- It is a part of the Department of Revenue in the Ministry of Finance.
- It provides inputs for policy and planning of direct taxes in India and is also responsible for the administration of direct tax laws through the Income Tax Department.

About GST Network

- The GST Network (GSTN) is a non-profit organization.
- It has been established to manage the entire IT system of the GST portal.
- This portal is used by the government to track every financial transaction.
- It also provides taxpayers with all services from registration to filing taxes and maintaining all tax details.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Important Institution

Source- Economics Times

7. Gujarat celebrates its foundation 60th foundation Day

- Gujarat celebrates its foundation 60th foundation Day on 1st May

Related Information

- The state of Gujarat came into existence on 1st May 1960 after the division of Mumbai state under Bombay Reorganization Act.
- Ahmedabad has featured in the Forbes list of 'the world's fastest-growing cities' at rank number 3 after Chengdu and Chongqing from China.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Polity and Governance

Source- The Hindu

03.05.2019

1. How does Cyclone get their name?

- The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) started the tropical cyclone naming system in 2000.
- The newest cyclone to emerge out of the Bay of Bengal has been named Fani.
- Before that, there were cyclones Hudhud in 2014, Ockhi in 2017 and Titli and Gaja in 2018.
- The Cyclones worldwide are named by 9 regions — North Atlantic, Eastern North Pacific, Central North Pacific, Western North Pacific, North Indian Ocean, South West Indian Ocean, Australian, Southern Pacific, and South Atlantic.
- Cyclones in the North Indian Ocean basin are named by the Indian Meteorological Department and the first tropical cyclone was named in 2004 as Onil (given by Bangladesh).
- Eight north Indian Ocean countries — Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Myanmar, Oman, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand, gave eight names each which was combined into a list of 64 names.
- One name from each country is picked in an order to name the cyclones.
- The next cyclone will be named Vayu.

Why name cyclones?

- Tropical cyclones are named to provide ease of communication between forecasters and the general public regarding forecasts, watches, and warnings.

Note:

- After the 64 names are exhausted, the eight countries will propose fresh lists of names.
- For cyclones from the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, these lists are not rotated every few years.
- The lists for storms in the Atlantic and Eastern Pacific basins are, however, rotated.

Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre (RSMC)

- It is responsible for the distribution of information, advisories, and warnings regarding the specific program they have a part of, agreed by consensus at the World Meteorological Organization as part of the World Weather Watch.
- A Tropical Cyclone Regional Specialized Meteorological Centre is responsible for detecting tropical cyclones in its designated area of responsibility, and for providing basic information about the systems present and their forecast position, movement and intensity.
- The India Meteorological Department (IMD/RSMC New Delhi) is responsible for tracking tropical cyclones within the North Indian Ocean.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Disaster Management

Source- Indian Express

2. What is 99942 Apophis?

- Recently a near-Earth asteroid 99942 Apophis will cruise by Earth, about 31,000 km above the surface.

Related Information

99942 Apophis asteroid

- Apophis is one of about 2,000 currently known as Potentially Hazardous Asteroid.
- It is rare for an asteroid 340 m wide size to pass by Earth so close.
- At one point, it will travel more than the width of the full Moon within a minute and it will get as bright as the stars in the Little Dipper, according to NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.
- Scientists hope their observations might help gain important scientific knowledge that could one day be used for planetary defence.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

3. What is Lottery in Election?

- The lottery is applicable in the election when two candidates in a constituency poll the same number of votes.
- According to Section 102 of the Representation of the People Act, if there is equality of votes and if one additional vote would entitle either of them to win, and if no decision has been made by the Returning Officer under the provisions of the Act.
- Then the High Court of that state decides by a lottery.
- The candidate who wins the lottery wins the election.

Note:

- In 2017, for instance, in the election toward number 220 of the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, Shiv Sena's Surendra Bagalkar and the BJP's Atul Shah got the same number of votes.
- The result was decided by lottery, and Mr Shah won.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- The Hindu

4. ADB steps up metro rail funding

- ADB has decided to finance metro rail projects and a rapid rail corridor between Delhi and Meerut as part of its effort to improve the urban transport system in India.
- It also talks to the respective State governments for funding the Bhopal Metro and Bengaluru Metro.

Related Information

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

- It is a regional development bank established on 19 December 1966.
- ADB is headquartered in Manila, Philippines.
- It aims to promote social and economic development in Asia.
- ADB has 67 members, of which 48 are from within Asia and the Pacific and 19 outside.
- Japan and the US hold the largest proportion of shares in ADB followed by China, India and Australia.
- It is also an official United Nations Observer.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –International Organisation

Source- The Hindu

5. Cyclone Fani: INCOIS warns of damage along the east coast

- Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) which is closely monitoring the Extremely Severe Cyclonic Storm "Fani" round the clock, has warned of likely damage to locations even far away along the east coast due to sustained high winds, storm surges and swell waves.

Related Information

INCOIS

- It is an autonomous organization of the Government of India, under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- It is located in Pragathi Nagar, Hyderabad.
- It is a unit of the Earth System Science Organization (ESSO).
- ESSO- INCOIS is mandated to provide the best possible ocean information and advisory services to society, industry, government agencies and the scientific community.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Important organisation

Source- TOI

6. Chandrayaan-2

- ISRO has said that Chandrayaan-2 is set to be launched any time between July 5 and July 16, 2019.

Related Information

- Chandrayaan-2 is India's second mission to the moon which is a totally indigenous mission.
- It comprises of an Orbiter, Lander named 'Vikram' and Rover named 'Pragyan'.
- The orbiter will circle the moon and provide information about its surface, while the Lander will make a soft landing on the surface and send out the rover.
- The payloads will collect scientific information on lunar topography, mineralogy, elemental abundance, lunar exosphere and signatures of hydroxyl and water-ice.
- Chandrayaan-2 will launch aboard a Geosynchronous Satellite Launch

Vehicle Mark III, (GSLV -MK III) rocket.

- The GSLV-MkIII is a three-stage heavy-lift launch vehicle that has been designed to carry four-tonne class satellites into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).
- Chandrayaan-2 is a follow-up mission from the Chandrayaan-1 mission- India's first lunar mission.

Chandrayaan-1 Mission

- It was launched in October 2008 and operated till August 2009.
- The mission included a lunar orbiter and an impactor.

Other Indian Space Mission

- Mangalyaan: It is also known as The Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) is a space probe orbiting Mars since September 24, 2014.
- Aditya-L1: This mission will help the scientist in the study and observation of the sun's properties.
- Gaganyaan: It is India's manned space mission by 2022

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source-Live Mint

7. Religious freedom in India continued 'downward trend' in 2018: USCIRF

- United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), in its 2019 report, has said that there is an overall deterioration of religious freedom conditions in 2018 in India.

Highlights of the Report

- USCIRF retained India in Tier Two Category of countries on religious freedom.
- Tier 2" identifies countries where religious freedom violations have happened but have not risen to the severity needed to be considered Tier 1
- Countries are placed in Tier 2 for engaging in or tolerating religious freedom violations that meet at least one of the elements of the - systematic, ongoing, egregious-standard for designation as a- country of particular concern.

- USCIRF has placed India in the Tier 2 country category Tier 2 countries are those in which violations engaged in or tolerated by the government during 2018 are serious and characterized by at least one of the elements of the Country of Particular Concern (CPC) standard.
- CPC status is given to countries which engage in or tolerate systematic, ongoing, egregious violations of religious freedom.
- The report has identified several limitations to the right to freedom of religion or belief and challenges faced by religious minorities in India.
- On a positive note, it has highlighted that that communal attacks dropped by 12 % in 2018 from their 2017 levels.
- Further, there has been a 12% increase in the budget of the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

USCIRF

- It is an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission which seeks to defend the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad.

Note:

- The fundamental right to freedom of religion is guaranteed under Articles 25, 26, 27 and 28 of Part III of the Indian Constitution.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Important Report

Source- Indian Express

8. Kashmir: Why the Hangul's future still hangs in the balance?
 - A massive decline in the population of Kashmir's iconic wildlife species, the Hangul continues to be a big concern as conservation efforts for the deer, going on for years, have not yielded any significant results so far.
 - From a population of 5,000 in the early 1900s, the Hangul's numbers have constantly declined over the decades, making it largely confined to the 141 square kilometres of Dachigam National Park

Related Information

Hangul

- Hangul is also known as Kashmir stag and it is the state animal of Jammu & Kashmir.
- It is the only Asiatic survivor or sub-species of the European red deer.
- It under Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- It is restricted to the Dachigam National Park some 15 km north-west of Jammu & Kashmir's summer capital Srinagar.
- It is classified as Critically Endangered in the IUCN list.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

9. GSI North Eastern Region installed geological display boards at Mawmluh cave, Therriaghat

- The boards are unveiled at Mawmluh cave and Therriaghat, Sobhar in East Khasi Hill District of Meghalaya.
- Mawmluh cave made headlines earlier as high resolution stable isotopic studies of the stalagmites from the cave have shown that there was a major climatic event about 4200 years ago.
- The stalagmite in the Mawmluh cave has been tagged a Global Stratotype Section and Point (GSSP) which is the first formally ratified marker of a geological time period in India.
- Meanwhile, Therriaghat marks the Cretaceous (K)-Palaeogene (Pg) mass extinction event.
- The Um-Sohryngkew (Wahrew) river section at Therriaghat is known for having the most complete records of the Cretaceous-Palaeogene (K-Pg) boundary transition in India.

Topic- GS-1- Art & Culture

Source- AIR

10. Rare life-size figurine unearthed in Phanigiri

- Archaeologists in Telangana have unearthed a rare treasure in the form of a life-sized stucco sculpture from a Buddhist site at Phanigiri in Suryapet.
- It is the biggest stucco sculpture found in the country so far.

- The life-size figurine found in the excavations is thought to represent one of Bhodhisattva in Jathaka Chakra.
- The stucco is about 1.73 metres in height and 35 cm in width.

Topic- GS-1- Art & Culture

Source- Times of India

06.05.2019

1. ISRO to launch RISAT-2BR1

- India is set to get another 'eye in the sky' as ISRO will launch its latest radar imaging satellite (Risat-2BR1) from Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh on May 22.
- Risat-2BR1 is much more advanced than the previous Risat-series satellite.
- Risat's X-band synthetic aperture radar (SAR) possesses day-night as well as all-weather monitoring capability.
- The radar can even penetrate clouds and zoom up to a resolution of 1 metre (means it can distinguish between two objects separated by 1 m distance).
- The new imaging satellite will boost all-weather surveillance capabilities of Indian security forces and will help detect any potential threat around the Indian borders.
- As the satellite can also track hostile ships at sea, it can be used to keep a hawk-eye on Chinese naval vessels in the Indian Ocean and Pakistani warships in the Arabian Sea.
- The images from old Risat-series satellites were earlier used to plan the surgical strike in 2016 and the air strike on a Jaish camp in Pakistan's Balakot this year.
- Risat also enhanced Isro's capability for disaster management applications.

Related Information

- After the 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai in 2008, Risat-2 satellite programme took priority over Risat-1 because of the advanced radar system, manufactured in Israel, and was launched on April 20, 2009, to

boost surveillance capabilities of security forces.

- From 536 km altitude, the satellite monitors Indian borders 24x7 and helps security agencies keep an eye on infiltrators. The synthetic aperture radar uses the motion of the radar antenna over a target region to provide finer spatial resolution than conventional beam-scanning radars.
- Typically, the larger the aperture, the higher the image resolution will be, regardless of whether the aperture is physical (a large antenna) or synthetic (a moving antenna) - this allows SAR to create high-resolution images with comparatively small physical antennas.

Topic- GS-3- Science & Technology

Source- Times of India

2. GLOBAL REGISTRY OF VIOLENT DEATHS

- SIPRI has launched a new initiative named Global Registry of Violent Deaths (GRVD) to establish the annual number of violent deaths worldwide.
- GRVD will count deaths caused by all forms of violence and display these in an open-source database.
- This will allow researchers, policymakers and the general public to track trends in violence at global, regional, national, provincial, city and municipal levels.
- The database will hold a single entry for every violent death, including time, location, perpetrator, victim and type of violence.

Related Information

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)

- It is an international institute based in Sweden.
- It is dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.
- It was established in 1966 which provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –International Organisation

Source- The Hindu

3. e-Governance Services India ties up with IIT-Kanpur to upscale Unnat Bharat Abhiyan

- A Special Purpose Vehicle under the Ministry of Electronics & IT, (Information Technology) CSC (Common Services Centre) e-Governance Services India Limited, has partnered with the IIT Kanpur to upscale 'Unnat Bharat Abhiyan'.
- The collaboration of IIT-Kanpur with the leading institutions with CSCs would strengthen the government's vision of Digital India.

Related Information

Unnat Bharat Abhiyan

- It is an initiative of the Ministry of HRD launched in 2014.
- It aims to link the Higher Education Institutions with a set of at least 5 villages so that these institutions can contribute to the economic and social betterment of these village communities using their knowledge base which helps to accelerate sustainable growth in rural India.
- IIT Kanpur has adopted 5 villages for its holistic development.
- The villages are situated on the outskirts of Kanpur and are as follows: Hridayapur, Baikanthpur, Ishwariganj, Pratappur Hari and Saxupurva.
- The second edition (Unnat Bharat Abhiyan 2.0) was launched in April 2018.
- Under this scheme, higher education institutions will participate in development activities, particularly in rural areas.

Objective

- To engage the faculty and students of Higher Educational Institutions in understanding rural realities.
- Identify and select existing innovative technologies, enable customization of technologies, or devise implementation methods for innovative solutions, as required by people.

- To allow Higher Educational Institutions to contribute to devising systems for smooth implementation of various Government Programs.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Government Scheme
Source- The Hindu

4. Karnataka limits the weight of school bags

- The Karnataka government issued an order directing all schools in the State, including government, aided and unaided institutions, to ensure that the weight of a school bag is not more than 10% of the child's weight.
- The order comes after the Union Ministry for Human Resource Development in October last year directed all States to draw up guidelines to reduce the weight of school bags.

Highlights of order

- All schools in the State, including government, aided and unaided institutions should ensure that the weight of a school bag is not more than 10% of the child's weight.
- A bag of a student in Class 1 or 2 should weigh no more than 2 kg.
- It can weigh anywhere between 2 and 3 kg for students from Class 3 to 5.
- The prescribed weight increases progressively, with students in Class 9 and 10 allowed to carry bags in the 4-5 kg range.
- Students in Classes 1 and 2 should not be given any homework.
- All classwork should be kept in the school itself, either in files or books.
- The third Saturday of every month should be followed as a "No School Bag Day".
- On that day, teachers have to engage students without any books. Suggested activities include field visits, general knowledge clubs, art classes, indoor and outdoor games, abacus, dance classes, and debates.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- The Hindu

5. Gaur (Indian Bison)

- An Indian Gaur fell into a well at Mavinakatte village, near Subrahmanya in Dakshina Kannada.

Related Information

Indian Bison

- The gaur also called the Indian bison, is the largest extant bovine.
- It is the state animal of Goa.
- This species is native to South and Southeast Asia.
- It has been listed as Vulnerable on the IUCN Red List since 1986 and CITES Appendix I
- The gaur is the tallest of wild cattle species.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

6. Sendai Framework

- UN agency for disaster reduction has commended the Indian Meteorological Department's "almost pinpoint accuracy" of early warnings of Cyclone Fani which help "India's zero-casualty approach due to the implementation of the Sendai Framework.

Related Information

Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (SFDRR)

- The member states of the United Nations Organisation approved the SFDRR at the Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction in March 2015 which is held in Sendai, Japan.
- The treaty is voluntary and not binding upon the member states.
- Under the framework, the primary role of the member states to reduce disaster risks is identified.
- The framework has a time frame of 15 years, i.e., 2015-2030.
- SFDRR aims at achieving a substantial reduction of disaster risk and disaster losses in lives, livelihoods and health; in the environmental, cultural, social, physical and economic, assets of people, communities, businesses and countries over the next 15 years.

The specific priorities of the Sendai Framework are:

- Understanding the disaster risk.
- Strengthening the governance of disaster risks for managing disaster risks.
- Investments in disaster risk reduction for resilience.

- Improving the disaster preparedness to ensure effective response, recovery, reconstruction and rehabilitation.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Disaster Management

Source- Indian Express

7. Kanyashree Prakalpa scheme

- Kanyashree Prakalpa scheme of West Bengal Government has witnessed a 10% growth in preventing dropout from school.

Related Information

Kanyashree Prakalpa scheme

- It was launched by West Bengal Government (Women Development and Social Welfare department) in October 2013.
- It was aimed at increasing educational attainment of girls, prevention of child marriage and financial inclusion.
- It is a conditional cash transfer scheme aimed at improving the status and well-being of girl child by incentivising schooling of teenage girls and delaying their marriages until the age of 18.

Objectives:

- Improve the lives and status of the adolescent girls in State.
- Provide financial help to girls from disadvantaged families to pursue higher studies for every girl from the state.
- Prevent child marriage.
- Improved outcomes in terms of their health (especially facilitate the prevention of infant and maternal mortality).
- Contribute towards empowerment of girls in the state.
- The scheme will cover all girl children within the age of 13 to 19 in the state.
- The incentive for higher studies is a one-time grant of **25,000** to unmarried girls above 18, who are pursuing education.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Government Scheme/

Source- The Hindu

8. Why is northeast India drying up rapidly?

- A team of researchers found that Northeast India, one of the wettest places on the Earth has been experiencing rapid drying, especially in the last 30 years due to the Pacific decadal oscillation
- Due to this oscillation, some places which used to get as high as 3,000 mm of rain during the monsoon season have seen a drop of about 25-30%.

Related Information

Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO)

- It is often described as a long-lived El Niño-like pattern of Pacific climate variability.
- PDO pattern is marked by widespread variations in the Pacific Basin and the North American climate.
- In parallel with the ENSO phenomenon, the extreme phases of the PDO have been classified as being either warm or cool, as defined by ocean temperature anomalies in the northeast and the tropical Pacific Ocean.
- When Sea surface temperature is anomalously cool in the interior North Pacific and warm along the Pacific Coast, and when sea level pressures are below average over the North Pacific, the PDO has a positive value.
- When the climate anomaly patterns are reversed, with warm Sea surface temperature (SST) anomalies in the interior and cool SST anomalies along the North American coast, or above average sea level pressures over the North Pacific, the PDO has a negative value.

Topic-GS Paper 3 –Disaster Management
Source- TOI

9. 'Chandanotsavam' at Simhachalam temple in A.P.

- A 2,000-strong police force would be deployed for the annual 'Chandanotsavam' festival of Lord Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy temple at Simhachalam.

Related Information

Chandanotsavam

- Chandanotsava (sandalwood festival), also known as Chandan Yatra, is the most important festival celebrated in the Simhachalam temple.
- It is celebrated on the festival day of Akshaya Tritiya.
- On this day, the Sandalwood paste, commonly referred to as Chandanam, covering the moolavar throughout the year is removed.
- As a result, devotees can see the original form of the deity's idol for 12 hours once in the whole year.

Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha temple

- The Shri Varaha Lakshmi Narasimha temple, Simhachalam is a Hindu temple situated on the Simhachalam hill in Andhra Pradesh.
- It is dedicated to one of the Hindu trinity deities Vishnu, who is worshipped there as Varaha Narasimha.
- Except on Akshaya Tritiya, the idol of Varaha Narasimha is covered with sandalwood paste throughout the year, which makes it resemble a Shiva Lingam.
- It was regarded as an important centre of Vaishnavism in the medieval period along with Srikurmam and others.
- The temple has been recognised by historians with the help of a 9th-century AD inscription by the Chalukya Chola king Kulottunga I.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

10. Chief economic advisor included in finance commission's advisory council
- The Chief Economic Advisor of India, Dr. Krishnamurthy Subramanian has been included as a Member of the Advisory Council of the Fifteenth Finance Commission.

Related Information

- The Chief Economic Adviser is a post in Government of India and is equivalent to the rank of Secretary to the Government of India.

- The CEA is the ex-officio cadre controlling authority of the Indian Economic Service.
- The office of Economic Adviser is attached to the Minister of Commerce and Industry.

Advisory Council:

The role of the council is to:

- Advise the Commission on any relevant issue related to the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Commission.
- To assist in the preparation of any research study which would enhance the Commission's understanding of the issue contained in its ToR and
- To help in broadening the Commission understands to seek best national and international practices on matters pertaining to fiscal devolution.

Finance Commission

- It constituted by the President under Article 280 of the Constitution mainly to give its recommendations on the distribution of tax revenues between the Union and the States and amongst the States themselves.
- The Commission is appointed every five years.
- It consists of a Chairman and four other members.
- The Chairman of the 15th finance commission is chaired by N. K. Singh.
- Its recommendations will cover the five year period commencing from 1st April 2020.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source-Economics Times

11. Indian Navy launches fourth Scorpene class submarine "Vela"

- The fourth of Indian Navy's stealth Scorpene class Submarines of Project 75 was launched at the Kanhoji Angre Wet Basin of Mazagon Dock Limited at Mumbai in Maharashtra.
- The submarine has been named 'Vela' after an earlier submarine, which was the lead submarine, of the erstwhile Vela class, the second batch of the Foxtrot class submarines acquired from erstwhile USSR.
- The submarines are being built at Mazagon Dock Limited, with the main collaborator being M/s Naval group, France.

Related Information

- The Navy will have six such submarines by the year 2020.
- These six Scorpene-class stealth submarines are being built under Project 75, in collaboration with DCNS, France and manufactured by Mazagon Dock Limited.
1st Scorpene Submarine – Kalvari
2nd Scorpene Submarine- Khanderi
3rd Scorpene Submarine- Karanj
- The six submarines will replace the Indian Navy's ageing Sindhughosh and Shishumar class of submarines.

Topic- GS-3- Science & Technology

Source- AIR

07.05.2019

1. Grizzled giant squirrel spotted in Tamil Nadu

- The researchers have sighted nests of the grizzled Squirrel at Pakkamalai Reserve Forests near Gingee in the Eastern Ghats.

Related Information

Grizzled Giant Squirrel

- It is usually known to nest in the Western Ghats in Southern India.
- In Southern India, it found in Chinnar Wildlife sanctuary in Kerala to Anamalai Tiger Reserve and Palani hills in Tamil Nadu.
- The species is endemic to the southern States of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and Sri Lanka.
- IUCN Status: Near threatened and listed under Schedule II of CITES.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- The Hindu

2. One million species at risk of extinction: UN

- According to the Global Assessment report of IPBES, the global rate of species extinction is already tens to hundreds of times higher than it has been, on average, over the last 10 million years.
- The report comes six months after the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warned that the world has less than 12 years to avoid catastrophic levels of global warming.

Key Numbers from the report:

- Around 10% of insect species are threatened with extinction.
- 23% of land areas have reduced agricultural productivity due to land degradation.
- About 25% of greenhouse gas emissions are caused by land clearing, crop production and fertilization.
- Around half of all live coral reef cover lost since the 1870s.
- Urban areas have grown more than 100% since 1992.

Related Information

Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)

- It is an independent intergovernmental body established to strengthen the science-policy interface for biodiversity and ecosystem services for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, long-term human well-being and sustainable development.
- It was established in Panama City, on 21 April 2012 by 94 governments.
- IPBES is placed under the auspices of four United Nations entities: UNEP, UNESCO, FAO and UNDP.
- It is administered by the United Nations Environment Programme.
- The IPBES secretariat is based in Bonn, Germany.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important Report

Source- The Hindu

3. Darbar move

- The Civil Secretariat and other offices of Jammu and Kashmir government will re-open in Summer Capital Srinagar as a part of bi-annual Darbar move.

Related Information

- Darbar move is the name for the bi-annual shift of the secretariat and all other government offices in J&K from Srinagar (state's summer capital) to Jammu (state's winter capital).
- The secretariat is located in Srinagar from May to October and in Jammu from November to April.
- Along with the secretariat, the J&K High Court also moves.

Background

- The practice was started by Dogra King Maharaja Ranbir Singh in 1872 to escape extreme weather conditions in these places.
- It was a compulsion in the past because of poor means of transportation and communication.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

4. G7 Environment Ministers met in Metz, France to discuss the climate crisis

- The G7's Environment Ministers gathered for a 2-day meeting in Metz, France to discuss on steps required to handle deforestation, plastic pollution, depletion of coral reefs and ways to build pacts between the countries in order to achieve the target.

Related Information

G7 (Group of Seven)

- The Group of 7 (G7) is a group consisting of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.
- The European Union is also represented within the G7.
- These countries are the seven major advanced economies as reported by the International Monetary Fund.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

5. Israel's Iron Dome anti-missile system

- As per the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), Gazans had launched 600 projectiles in their territory. The IDF also said that its Iron Dome aerial defence system had intercepted dozens of the incoming rockets and shot many of them.

Related Information

What is the Iron Dome anti-missile system?

- The Iron Dome is a mobile all-weather air defence system developed by Israel to intercept and destroy short-range rockets and artillery shells fired from short distances.
- The system detects rockets 4 to 70 km away and will engage with interceptors to destroy targets mid-air.

- According to the Missile Threat, the United States provided funding to the system starting in 2011.
- Iron Dome will operate day and night, under adverse weather conditions, and can respond to multiple threats simultaneously.
- The Dome has three central components – detection and tracking radar, the weapon control system and missile firing unit.
- There are 10 Iron Dome batteries that protect Israel, and each battery includes three to four stationary launchers with 20 Tamir missiles and a battlefield radar.
- Tamir missiles feature electro-optical sensors and steering fins with proximity fuze blast warheads, that explode on contact with another missile.

Topic- GS-3- Defence

Source- Indian Express

6. Scientists carry out a genetic study on people of Lakshadweep Islands

- The scientist from CSIR-Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) carried out a genetic study on People of Lakshadweep Island.

Highlights of the Study

- The study found that a majority of human ancestry in Lakshadweep is largely derived from South Asia with minor influences from East and West Eurasia.
- There was no evidence of early human migration through the Lakshadweep islands.
- They found a strong founder effect for both paternal and maternal lineages — a sign that the island population had limited genetic mixing

Related Information

Lakshadweep Island

- Lakshadweep is an archipelago of 36 islands formerly known as the Laccadive, Minicoy, and Aminidivi Islands.
- It is a Union Territory and is governed by the Union Government of India.
- The islands form the smallest Union Territory of India.
- Kavaratti serves as the capital of the Union Territory and the region comes

under the jurisdiction of Kerala High Court.

Tribes of Lakshadweep

- The major communities that reside in Lakshadweep are Aminidivi, Koyas, Malmis and Malacheris.
- Aminidivis is believed to be the first group of people to have started inhabiting these islands.
- Melacheris are considered to be the main working community on the island.
- Koyas are the landowners of Lakshadweep and Malmis are the one who works for them.
- Malayalam is the most commonly used language in Lakshadweep.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

7. Finance Ministry imposed anti-dumping duty on the import of saccharine from Indonesia

- The Finance Ministry has, on the recommendations of the Commerce Ministry, imposed an anti-dumping duty on the import of saccharine from Indonesia.

Related Information About Anti-Dumping Duty

- These are additional import duties which are imposed to check Dumping. Note: Dumping refers to the export/sale of a commodity in a foreign country by a company at a price which is lower than their domestic market price.
- As per WTO Norms, Member countries can impose Anti-Dumping duty if:
 - (i) An exporter is dumping goods
 - (ii) It is adversely affecting domestic industries

Saccharine

- It is an artificial or non-nutritive, sweetener which is 200 to 700 times sweeter than sucrose (table sugar).
- Saccharine is a compound most commonly used in sugar-substitute sweeteners.
- It is used to sweeten products such as drinks, candies, cookies, and medicines.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Economics Terms

Source- Economics Times

8. IIT Mandi's self-cleaning glass can purify water using sunlight

- Scientists at IIT Mandi have developed a self-cleaning glass that can remove microbes and organic pollutants -- like dyes, detergent and drugs -- from wastewater, using only sunlight.
- They have developed a transparent calcium borate glasses and TiO₂ crystallised glass nanocomposites which can kill microbes and break down organic chemicals in the presence of solar light.
- These glasses have photocatalytic and self-cleaning properties which help in destroying the bacteria and other microbes from wastewater in the presence of sunlight,
- The existing purification techniques can remove solid pollutants as well as dissolved inorganic compounds; removing dissolved organic compounds remain a challenge.

Major Sources of Pollution

- Wastewater from pharmaceutical and textile industries are a major source of river pollution in India and abroad.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- DD news

08.05.2019

1. GRIHA Council launches rating system: 'GRIHA for Existing Day Schools'

- Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment (GRIHA) Council recently released a rating tool called 'GRIHA for Existing Day Schools' to evaluate the environmental performance of existing schools across India.

'GRIHA for Existing Day Schools' rating system

- It works as an integrated tool to evaluate performance and provide solutions for enhanced energy and water efficiencies, increased thermal and visual comfort, and decreased operational and maintenance costs.
- The rating familiarises the students with the concepts of sustainability by involving them, under the guidance of

their teachers, on evaluating the environmental impact of schools on the environment.

- The rating process help to establish contact with nature and with each other using the approach of co-creation and understanding.

Green Rating for Integrated Habitat Assessment Council

- It is an independent, not- for -profit society jointly set up by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) and the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).
- It helps to promote and administer green buildings in India.
- GRIHA has been acknowledged as a tool to evaluate the reduction in emission intensity through habitats, as part of a mitigation strategy for combating climate change in India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) submitted to UNFCCC.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –I mportant institution Source- Economics Times

2. Karnataka has no right to utilise Pennaiyar water': TN

- Tamil Nadu has told the Supreme Court that Karnataka has no right to utilise the waters of the Pennaiyar River to the detriment of the people of Tamil Nadu.

Related Information

Pennaiyar River

- The South Pennar River (also known as Dakshina Pinakini in Kannada and Thenpennai or Ponnaiyar in Tamil) is a trans-boundary river in India.
- It is a peninsular river which is dry for the most part of the year.
- The river originates in the Nandi Hills in the Chikkaballapura district of Karnataka.
- It flows through Tamil Nadu before emptying into the Bay of Bengal.
- Its catchment area located in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu states.
- Markandeyanadhi is the major tributary which has its catchment area both in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu.
- Dam on the river: Sathanur Dam is built near Tiruvannamalai.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- The Hindu

3. KVIC distributes bee-boxes under 'Honey Mission'

- Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has distributed more than one lakh bee-boxes among farmers and unemployed youths across the country in less than two years under its 'Honey Mission' initiative.

Related Information

Honey Mission

- The mission was launched in August 2017 in line with the 'Sweet Revolution'.
- The 'Sweet Revolution' was launched in 2016 to promote beekeeping and associated activities.
- According to the KVIC, the Mission has created more than 10,000 new jobs, besides creating around 25,000 additional man-days through the fabrication of bee boxes and honey extractors.

KVIC

- It is a statutory body established under the Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act, 1956.
- The KVIC is charged with the planning, promotion, organisation and implementation of programmes for the development of Khadi and other village industries in the rural areas in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary.
- It functions under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
- It is a nodal implementation agency of Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) at the national level.
- PMEGP is a major credit-linked subsidy programme being implemented by MSME Ministry since 2008-09 and will Continue till 2019-20.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Government Scheme

Source- Indian Express

4. Proxy Voting

- The option of proxy voting is available only for armed forces, police, and government officials posted outside India.

- The person can authorise another residing in the same polling booth area to cast a vote on his/her behalf.
- This option is currently available for wives of the above-mentioned personnel, but not for the husbands.
- The provision for voting through a proxy is valid until the person making the appointment is a service voter.
- Once appointed, the proxy will continue until his or her appointment is revoked by the service voter.

Note:

The Representation of the People (Amendment) Bill 2017 that extends the proxy voting to NRIs was passed in the Lok Sabha during the monsoon session year 2018 but lapsed in Lok Sabha.

Provisions of the Bill

- As of now, an army man's wife is entitled to be enrolled as a service voter, but a woman army officer's husband is not, according to the provisions in the electoral law.
- The bill proposes to replace the term 'wife' with 'spouse', thus making the provision of gender neutral.
- Members of the armed forces, central armed police forces, personnel of state police forces posted outside their state and employees of the centre posted outside India are eligible to be enrolled as service voters.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- The Hindu

5. India's Jagjit Pavadia re-elected to International Narcotics Control Board

- India's Jagjit Pavadia was re-elected to the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB) for another term.

INCB

- Established in 1968, the INCB is an independent and quasi-judicial monitoring body for the implementation of the UN's international drug control conventions.
- INCB consists of 13 members who are elected by the ECOSOC and who serve in their personal capacity.

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

- ECOSOC, one of the six main organs of the United Nations established by the UN Charter in 1946, is the principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on economic, social and environmental issues, as well as for implementation of the internationally agreed development goals.
- ECOSOC serves as the central mechanism for the activities of the United Nations system and its specialized agencies and supervises the subsidiary and expert bodies in the economic, social and environmental fields.

Topic- GS-2- International Organization

Source- AIR

6. NASA spacecraft "DART" to collide a small moonlet in 2022

- The US space agency NASA revealed details about its plan to hit a small moonlet target in a double asteroid system with a spacecraft in 2022, its first mission to demonstrate a planetary defence technique.
- The asteroid, called Didymos or Didymos B, is a moon asteroid around 150 meters tall orbiting a larger body Didymos A, the most accessible asteroid of its size from the Earth.
- The spacecraft called Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART) will carry an optical navigation system to capture images that help the spacecraft reach its target.
- The DART spacecraft will crash itself into the asteroid at a speed of approximately six kilometres per second and the collision will change the speed of the moonlet in its orbit around the main body by a fraction of one per cent, enough to be measured using telescopes on the Earth.

Topic- GS-3- Science & Technology

Source- Business Standard

7. Purple Frog

- The researcher at the Kerala Forest Research Institute (KFRI) and herpetologists found the species of Purple frog which is endemic to the Western Ghats, as the 'Maveli' frog.

- Herpetology is the branch of zoology concerned with the study of amphibians and reptiles and those who studied it are called Herpetologist.

Related Information

Purple Frog

- It is listed as endangered on the red list IUCN.
- It's a unique species and endemic to Southern Western Ghats.
- The Purple frog feeds mostly on soil-mites, ants and termites using its fluted tongue
- Some scientist believes that the species should be rightly called a 'living fossil' as it's evolutionary roots suggest it could have shared space with dinosaurs going back almost 70 million years ago.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment and Biodiversity

Source- TOI

8. Odisha's wildlife sanctuaries ravaged by Fani

Balukhand Wildlife Sanctuary

- It is located along the Bay of Bengal coast, between the towns of Puri and Konark.
- The sanctuary is home to a herd of Blackbuck (*Antelope cervicapra*) and Olive Ridley Sea Turtles (*Lepidochelys olivacea*) nest on the beaches.

Nandankanan Zoological Park

- Nandankanan Zoological Park established in 1960 and one of the first zoo in India to join the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) in 2009.

Chandaka Elephant Wildlife Sanctuary

- Chandka Elephant Sanctuary is a wildlife reserve located in the south fringe of Cuttack in the Indian state of Odisha.
- It was designated as an elephant reserve in December 1982.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

9. Traces of banned bisphenol-A found in baby bottles

- In a recent study conducted by Toxics Link, it has been found that bisphenol-A (BPA) a toxic chemical which is

being prohibited in feeding bottles for babies.

- As per the current Bureau of Indian Standard (BIS) regulations, the use of BPA is prohibited, but the current study observed the migration of BPA in baby feeding bottle samples.

Related Information

Bisphenol-A (BPA)

- BPA is an endocrine-disrupting chemical that has been accepted as the “chemical of concern” globally.
- The toxic chemical is known to mimic a hormone that activates the progression of cancer and interferes with the development of the reproductive system
- Epidemiological studies of children indicate correlations between BPA exposure and heart diseases, liver toxicity, and metabolic syndrome (diabetes obesity).

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and Technology

Source- Down to Earth

09.05.2019

1. Environment Impact Assessment exemption sought for Kalasa-Banduri project

- The Mahadayi Water Disputes Tribunal (MWDT) recently greenlighted the completion of the Kalasa-Banduri project.

Related Information

Kalasa-Banduri project

- It is a project undertaken by the Government of Karnataka to improve drinking water supply to the Districts of Belagavi, Dharwad and Gadag, which supplies the drinking water needs of the said 3 districts, i.e., Dharwad, Belagavi and Gadag.
- It involves building dam and Canals across Kalasa and Banduri, two tributaries of the Mahadayi river to divert 7.56 TMC water to the Malaprabha River.
- The project was in a legal battle between Karnataka and Goa government over sharing of water of Mahadayi River.

- The pre-feasibility report notes that the area to be submerged comprises verdant forests falling in the notified Eco-Sensitive Zone of Bhimgad Wildlife Sanctuary.

Mahadayi River

- The Mahadayi or Mandovi River is described as the lifeline of the Indian state of Goa.
- Important Tributaries of Mahadayi River include, Kalasa Nala, Surla Nala, Haltar Nala, Poti Nala, Mahadayi Nala, Pansheer Nala, Bail Nala, Andher Nala.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source-Livemint

2. Mueller report: Trump asserts executive privilege

- U.S. President Donald Trump exercised the executive privilege to prevent the release of the unredacted Mueller report to the House Judiciary Committee.

Related Information

Mueller Report

- It is formally titled Report on the Investigation into Russian Interference in the 2016 Presidential Election.
- It is the official report documenting the findings and conclusions of Special Counsel Robert Mueller's investigation into Russian efforts to interfere in the 2016 United States presidential election, allegations of conspiracy or coordination between Donald Trump's presidential campaign and Russia.

Executive privilege

- Executive privilege is the power of the President of the United States and other members of the executive branch of the United States Government.
- It provides power to resist certain subpoenas and other interventions by the legislative and judicial branches of government in pursuit of information or personnel relating to confidential communications that would impair governmental functions.
- The power of Congress or the federal courts to obtain such information is not mentioned explicitly in the United States Constitution.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important Report

Source- The Hindu

3. Gangamma Jatara

- It is a very famous local festival for the people of Tirupati.
- It is celebrated in Thathaya Gunta Gangamma Temple.
- It is done every year in the month of May.
- This festival is to offer prayers to the goddess Gangamma who is believed to be the sister of Lord Venkateswara.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

4. Dengvaxia: FDA Approves First Vaccine for the Prevention of Dengue

- U.S Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announces the approval of Dengvaxia, the first vaccine approved for the prevention of dengue disease caused by all dengue viruses.
- Dengue is endemic in the U.S. territories of American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

Dengvaxia

- It is basically a live, attenuated dengue virus.
- An attenuated virus is a virus that retains its properties of triggering an immune response in the body but its ability to lead to disease is compromised.
- It has to be administered in people of ages 9 to 16 who have laboratory-confirmed previous dengue infection and who live in endemic areas.

Related Information

Dengue

- It is the most common mosquito-borne viral disease in the world.
- The Aedes aegypti mosquito is the main vector that transmits the viruses that cause dengue.
- The viruses are passed on to humans through the bites of an infective female Aedes mosquito, which mainly acquires the virus while feeding on the blood of an infected person.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science & Technology

Source- Down to Earth

5. Iran should not breach the nuclear deal

- Europe has warned Iran that it would re-impose sanctions on Iran if it violates parts of the 2015 nuclear deal.
- This statement came after Iran President is expected to announce that Iran would restart part of its halted nuclear programme in response to the U.S withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal.

Related Information

Iran Nuclear Deal

- Iran Nuclear deal which is known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) was announced in 2015.
- The deal was signed between Iran and the P5+1 group (US, UK, France, Russia, China and Germany).
- It restricts Iran's nuclear programme, in return for lifting most economic sanctions against it.
- The key provisions of the nuclear deal are
 - (a) Limits on uranium enrichment
 - (b) Limits on the number of nuclear centrifuges (centrifuge is a device used to enrich uranium)
 - (c) Restrictions on plutonium enrichment- Stopping Iran from operating at Arak nuclear site which was used to make plutonium
 - (d) Allowing the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for inspections.
- The USA had withdrawn from the deal in 2018 citing the following reasons:
 - (a) The JCPOA failed to deal with the threat of Iran's missile programme.
 - (b) The deal does not include strong mechanisms for inspections and verification.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – International Relation

Source- Indian Express

6. India gets re-elected as an observer to Arctic Council

- India has been re-elected as an observer to the Arctic Council.
- India was an Observer at the Council from 2013 onwards.

- Besides India, China, South Korea, Singapore, Italy and Japan also have Observer status at the Council.
- The eight-member grouping of nations that have territories in the Arctic.
- The Arctic Council is formed of Russia, the United States, Canada, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Iceland and Finland.

Topic- GS-2- International Organization
Source- Down To Earth

7. WHO for eliminating industrially produced Trans fats by 2023

- The WHO and the International Food and Beverage Alliance (IFBA) joined hand for elimination industrially produced trans fats.

Related Information

Trans Fat

- Trans fat is also called trans-unsaturated fatty acids or Trans fatty acids, is a type of unsaturated fat that occurs in small amounts in nature.
- It is also widely produced industrially from vegetable fats starting in the 1950s for use in margarine, snack food, packaged baked goods, and for frying fast food.
- Fats contain long hydrocarbon chains, which can be either unsaturated, i.e., have double bonds, or saturated, i.e., have no double bonds.
- Trans fats also occur naturally, e.g., the vaccenic acid in female breast milk and naturally in meat and dairy products from ruminants.
- A diet high in Trans fats can contribute to obesity, high blood pressure, and higher risk for heart disease.
- Trans fat has also been implicated in the development of Type 2 diabetes.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

8. UDAY driving fiscal slippages: RBI

- RBI has voiced its concern over government schemes such as income support, revival package for power distribution companies and farm loan waivers as such schemes led to fiscal slippages.

Related Information

UDAY (Ujwal DISCOM Assurance Yojana) Scheme

- It is a Centre's scheme which was launched by Union Power Ministry in 2015.
- Its aim to provide financial turnaround and revival package for state electricity distribution companies (DISCOMs).
- The scheme is optional for the states to join.
- Under it, state governments were to take over up to 75% of their respective DISCOMS' debt by issuing sovereign bonds to pay back the lenders.
- Remaining 25% of debt will be issued by DISCOMS in the form of DISCOM bonds.
- In return for the bailout, the DISCOMS have been given target dates (2017 to 2019) by which they will have to meet efficiency parameters such as a reduction in power lost through transmission, theft and faulty metering, installing smart meters and implementing GIS (geographic information system) mapping of loss-making areas.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important Schemes
Source- The Hindu Business

10.05.2019

1. 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention

- The fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention is held jointly and back-to-back with Rotterdam Convention COP 9 and Stockholm Convention on COP 9 in Geneva, Switzerland.
- The theme of the meetings was "Clean Planet, Healthy People: Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste"
- Working languages: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish.

Related Information
Basel Convention (1989)

- It will discuss the control of trans-boundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal.
- It covers a wide range of wastes defined as “hazardous wastes” that are explosive, flammable, poisonous, infectious, corrosive, toxic or eco-toxic including household and incinerator ash.
- It is the UN Treaty.
- It does not address the movement of radioactive waste.

Rotterdam Convention (1998)

- on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade
- The PIC procedure is the mechanism for formally obtaining and disseminating the decisions of importing Parties for receiving the chemicals under the convention and ensuring compliance by the exporting countries.
- The inclusion of chemicals under this convention does not ban the chemical.
- However, importing countries need to follow the PIC procedure and it may lead to an increase in the trade cost, as well as delay the import/export process.

Stockholm Convention (2001)

- It aims to eliminate or restrict the production and use of persistent organic pollutants (POPs).
- It is the UN Treaty.
- The US is not a party to this treaty.
- POPs are chemical substances that:
 - (a) Persist in the environment
 - (b) Bio-accumulate through the food web
 - (c) Pose a risk of causing adverse effects to human health and the environment

Topic-GS Paper 3–Important Convention Source- Indian Express

2. Giant Viruses found in water samples from Mumbai

- Indian Scientist has found new Giant Viruses in the water samples which is consumed in Mumbai.

Related Information Giant virus

- A giant virus is a very large virus, some of which are larger than typical bacteria.
- They are giant nucleocytoplasmic large DNA viruses (NCLDVs) that have extremely large genomes compared to other viruses and contain many unique genes not found in other life forms.
- Most of them are categorized as a harmless virus because they are not showing any virulent gene which is harmful to Human.
- It was found growing within amoebae present in a cooling tower in England in 1992.
- It is hypothesized that Giant Viruses hold the key to understanding the evolution of living organisms from simpler forms.

Example of Giant Viruses is

- Bandramavirus (BMV)
- Powai lake megavirus (PLMV)
- Mimivirusbombay (MVB)
- Kurlavirus (KUV).

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science & Technology Source- Down to Earth

3. Wheat varieties susceptible to new strains of yellow rust fungus: study

- Agriculture scientists have cautioned about the likely spread of extremely virulent strains of fungus that causes yellow rust in wheat, to which currently used wheat cultivars show high susceptibility.
- The situation is particularly grim as the bread wheat cultivar, HD267, that currently occupies 10 to 12 million hectares (ha) areas is susceptible to these new strains.

Related Information

Yellow Rust Disease

- Yellow rust disease of wheat, also known as stripe rust of wheat, is a disease caused by fungus Puccinia.
- These fungus are frequently found in cold wheat-growing regions such as North Western Plains Zone and Northern Hills Zone.
- The infection causes reduction of kernel numbers per spike and decreases the weight of wheat kernels, is capable of causing up to 70 per cent decline in wheat yields.

- Currently used wheat cultivars in India have a part of rye chromosome which confers resistance to yellow rust and powdery mildew disease.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- Down to Earth

4. CITES CoP18

- Ahead of the CITES 18th Conference of Parties (CoP), Botswana — the country with the highest elephant population in the world — is trying to mobilise Southern African countries to come to a common consensus on how to deal with the rising population of elephants.
- The CoP, which was slated to be held in the Sri Lankan capital of Colombo from May 23-June 3, has been postponed indefinitely on account of security concerns after the Easter bombings.
- Most elephant populations of Africa are listed in Appendix I which forbids all commercial trade, the elephant populations of southern African countries like Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe and South Africa are listed on Appendix II of CITES.
- Trade in species listed in Appendix II can take place through a permit system.

Related Information

CITES

- CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, also known as the Washington Convention) is a multilateral treaty to protect endangered plants and animals.
- It was drafted as a result of a resolution adopted in 1963 at a meeting of members of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- The convention was opened for signature in 1973 and CITES entered into force on 1 July 1975.
- Each protected species or population is included in one of three lists, called Appendices.
- Currently, 183 countries are a signatory to the CITES.

CoP

- Species are proposed for inclusion in or deletion from the Appendices at meetings of the Conference of the Parties (CoP), which are held approximately once every three years, the most recent of which was CoP (CoP 17) in Johannesburg, South Africa from 24 September to 5 October 2016 at the Sandton Convention Center.

Topic- GS-3- Environment

Source- Down to Earth

5. Arunachal pit viper

- A team of herpetologists have discovered a new species of reddish-brown pit viper with a unique heat-sensing system in West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.
- The Arunachal pit viper is the second serpent to have been discovered after the non-venomous crying keelback in the State's Lepa-Rada district in 2018.
- It is the rarest of all known pit vipers in the world.
- Arunachal Pradesh is the only Indian state to have a pit viper named after it.
- Other known Vit Piper in India are
 - Malabar Pit Viper
 - Horseshoe Pit Viper
 - Hump-nosed Pit Viper
 - Himalayan Pit Viper

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

6. Ireland declares a climate emergency

- Ireland's parliament has become the second after Britain's to declare a climate emergency.
- Britain's parliament became the first in the world to declare a climate emergency, passing the largely symbolic motion on May 1.

Objectives of Climate Emergency

- National government needs to declare an emergency and put resources in place to help reduce carbon emissions.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- Economic Times

7. Amazon's Jeff Bezos Unveils Lunar Lander Project "Blue Moon"

- Jeff Bezos, who heads both Amazon and space company Blue Origin, unveiled a lunar lander "Blue Moon" that would be used to transport equipment, and possibly human beings, to the south pole of the Moon by 2024.
- The goal is to land on the Moon's south pole, where there is ice.
- Water can be exploited to produce hydrogen, which in turn could fuel future exploration of the solar system.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science & Technology

Source- Economic Times

8. Barn owls

- The scenic islands of Lakshadweep have 'recruited' three pairs of barn owls from Kerala to fight what has so far been a losing battle against the rodents.

Related Information

Barn owls

- The barn owl (*Tyto alba*) is the most widely distributed species of owl and one of the most widespread of all birds.
- The barn owl is found almost everywhere in the world except polar and desert regions, in Asia north of the Himalayas, most of Indonesia, and some Pacific islands.
- It is considered to be of least concern on the IUCN Red List.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

9. World Customs Organisation

- Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) is organising a meeting of the Regional Heads of Customs Administration of Asia Pacific Region of the World Customs Organisation (WCO) in Kochi.
- India is hosting this meeting in its capacity as Vice Chair of the Asia Pacific region for a two-year period from July 2018 to June 2020.

Related Information

WCO

- It is an independent intergovernmental body whose mission is to enhance the

effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.

- WCO represents 182 Customs administrations across the globe that collectively process approximately 98% of world trade.
- The WCO has divided its Membership into six Regions.
- Each of the six Regions is represented by a regionally elected Vice-Chairperson to the WCO Council.
- WCO offers its members a range of Conventions and other international instruments, as well as technical assistance and training services provided either directly by the Secretariat, or with its participation.
- WCO has also been responsible for administering the World Trade Organization's agreement on Customs Valuation which provides a system for placing values on imported goods, and the Rules of Origin, which are used to determine the origin of a given commodity

Topic- GS Paper 2 – International Organisation

Source-PIB

13.05.2019

1. United Nations to hold Ocean Conference 2020 in Portugal

- United Nations General Assembly decided to hold its 2020 high-level conference early June in Portugal's Lisbon.
- The theme of this high-level 2020 United Nations Conference is "scaling up ocean action based on science and innovation for the implementation of Goal 14: stocktaking, partnerships and solutions.
- The objective of this conference is to support the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 14 (SDG 14) which stated as to conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.

Related Information

United Nations General Assembly

- The United Nations General Assembly is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations.
- It is the only organ of UN in which all member nations have equal representation and the main deliberative, policy-making, and representative organ of the UN.
- Its powers are to oversee the budget of the UN, appoint the non-permanent members to the Security Council, appoint the Secretary-General of the United Nations, receive reports from other parts of the UN, and make recommendations in the form of General Assembly Resolutions.
- Its composition, functions, powers, voting, and procedures are set out in Chapter IV of the United Nations Charter.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – International Organisation

Source- The Hindu

2. Singapore reports the first case of rare monkeypox virus

- Singapore has reported its first ever case of monkeypox which is endemic in parts of Central and Western Africa.

Monkeypox virus (MPXV)

- It is an orthopoxvirus that causes a viral disease with symptoms in humans similar, but milder, to those seen in smallpox patients.
- Transmission is usually via close contact with infected animals such as rodents and monkeys and is limited between people.
- There is no evidence to date that person-to-person transmission alone can sustain monkeypox in the human population.
- There are no specific treatments or vaccines available for monkeypox virus infection.
- It is not normally fatal but has been in rare cases.
- Symptoms in humans of monkeypox include lesions, fever, muscle ache and chills.

Related Information

Monkey Fever in Karnataka

- It is also known as Kyasanur forest disease.

- It is a tick-borne viral disease caused by Kyasanur forest disease virus which also causes dengue and yellow fever.
- It is endemic to South Asia and was first detected in 1957 in Kyasanur Forest of Karnataka.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science & Technology

Source- The Hindu

3. Apache Guardian attack helicopter

- US aerospace company Boeing has handed over to India the first AH-64E (I) – Apache Guardian helicopter at Boeing production facility in Arizona, USA.
- The Indian Air Force (IAF) will induct 22 Apaches by March 2020 under the deal inked with the US in 2015.
- The first batch of these helicopters is scheduled to be shipped to India by July 2019.

Related Information

Apache Guardian attack helicopter

- The AH-64 Apache is a multi-role combat helicopter and is used by the US Army and a number of international defence forces.
- It is equipped with all-weather and night-fighting features apart from an advanced weapons system.
- The Apaches are armed with Stinger air-to-air missiles,
- It equipped with an advanced laser, infrared and target acquisition designation.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source- TOI

4. WTO ministerial meeting of developing countries held in Delhi

- The two-day meeting is being held at a time when the multilateral rule-based-trading system is facing serious and grave challenges.
- The meeting will provide an opportunity for the Ministers to discuss various issues and the way forward.

Related Information

WTO (World Trade Organization)

- It is an intergovernmental organization that regulates international trade.

- The WTO officially commenced on 1 January 1995 under the Marrakesh Agreement, signed by 123 nations on 15 April 1994, replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT)
- The WTO has 164 members and 22 observer governments.
- The highest decision-making body of the WTO is the Ministerial Conference, which usually meets every two years.
- Uruguay Round-eighth GATT round- It was the biggest negotiating mandate on trade ever agreed. The talks were going to extend the trading system into several new areas.
- Marrakesh Agreement- The Final Act concluding the Uruguay Round and officially establishing the WTO regime was signed 15 April 1994, during the ministerial meeting at Marrakesh, Morocco, and hence is known as the Marrakesh Agreement.
- Doha Round- launched at the fourth ministerial conference in Doha, Qatar in November 2001. This was to be an ambitious effort to make globalization more inclusive and help the world's poor, particularly by slashing barriers and subsidies in farming.

Peace Clause

- Trade negotiators generally refer to Article 13 of the World Trade Organization's Agreement on Agriculture as the Peace Clause.
- Article 13 holds that domestic support measures and export subsidies of a WTO Member that is legal under the provisions of the Agreement on Agriculture cannot be challenged by other WTO Members on grounds of being illegal under the provisions of another WTO agreement.

Subsidies related to WTO

- Green Box subsidies- which are no or least market distorting includes measures decoupled from output such as income-support payments (decoupled income support), safety – net programs, payments under environmental programs, and agricultural research and development subsidies.

- Blue Box subsidies- Only 'Production limiting Subsidies' under this are allowed. They cover payments based on acreage, yield, or number of livestock in a base year.
- Amber Box subsidies – Those subsidies which are trade distorting and need to be curbed.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economic Development

Source- AIR

5. Polydiketoenamine: New plastic material can be broken down and reused repeatedly
 - The researchers have designed a recyclable plastic that can be disassembled into its components at the molecular level.
 - The new material, polydiketoenamine (PDK), can be broken down and reassembled without the loss of performance or quality.
 - As a result, the plastic can be reconstructed into a different shape and colour repeatedly, like a Lego set.

Related Information

- There are very few plastics that can be recycled into reusable products due to various additives such as dyes and flame retardants.
- Polyethylene terephthalate (PET) is the most recyclable plastic, yet is only recycled at a rate of 20 to 30 percent.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- Down to Earth

6. Cyclone Fani's fury creates four new mouths in Odisha's Chilika Lake

- The extremely severe cyclone, Fani, has created four new mouths in Chilika Lake which is Asia's largest brackish water lake, connecting to the Bay of Bengal.
- "Chilika lagoon had only two active mouths — the point where it meets the sea before Fani hit the Odisha coast.
- Four new mouths have opened due to wave energy with high tidal prism.

Effects on its ecosystem

- The salinity of Chilika lagoon is increased due to the opening of these new mouths through which a lot of seawater is entering Chilika Lake.

- The rise in salinity will lead to increase in productivity.
- If seawater ingression goes up, fish migration will increase and the biodiversity will get richer.
- However, its long term impact may be dangerous.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

7. Chandrayaan-2 will carry 14 payloads from India

- ISRO issued an update on the Chandrayaan-2 mission, saying it will carry 14 Indian payloads which were 13 Payloads earlier.

Related Information

Chandrayaan-2

- It is India's second mission which is a totally indigenous mission.
- It comprises of an Orbiter, Lander named 'Vikram' and Rover named 'Pragyan'.
- The orbiter will circle the moon and provide information about its surface, while the Lander will make a soft landing on the surface and send out the rover.
- The rover will be used mostly for in situ experiments.
- Chandrayaan-2 will launch aboard a Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark III, (GSLV -MK III) rocket.
- The GSLV-Mk III is a three-stage heavy-lift launch vehicle that has been designed to carry four-tonne class satellites into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).
- ISRO had launched its orbiter mission Chandrayaan-1 on its PSLV booster in 2008.
- The spacecraft had 11 payloads.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science & Technology

Source- Indian Express

8. Climate change knowledge management in India

- There is a deficiency of knowledge products on climate change impacts, vulnerability assessment and cost-effective adaptation and resilience planning.
- The PRECIS (Providing REgional Climates for Impact Studies) climate

model, published in 2006 and revised in 2012, is still at a very coarse resolution, and the authors from the Indian Institute of Science acknowledge the limitations of climate models on assessing extreme climate projections that are important for adaptation planning.

- The Coordinated Regional Downscaling Experiment (CORDEX)— recently established by the World Climate Research Program (WCRP) and Indian Institute for Tropical Meteorology, with the aim of developing an international coordinated framework to generate improved regional climate change projections worldwide — is yet publish usable climate change projections for developing adaptation plans in India.
- In the absence of information on climate change impacts and vulnerability assessment, State Action Plan on Climate Change (SAPCC) has come up with weak adaptation strategies and unrealistic cost estimates.
- The Climate and Development Knowledge Network (CDKN) has only about 33 knowledge products by itself and 14 by its partner organisation on the theme of adaptation and resilience for India.
- The National Mission on Strategic Knowledge on Climate Change was made as one of the eight national missions in the right spirit. The mission's objective was to develop knowledge of climate change that can cater to climate action plans.
- Knowledge management is an important component in technical assistance programmes on climate change, which aims to capture good practices for feeding into development policies and programmes and support capacity building.

Topic- GS-3- Environment

Source- Down To Earth

14.05.2019

1. DRDO Successfully Conducts Flight Test of ABHYAS

- DRDO had successfully conducted a flight test of ABHYAS.
- ABHYAS is a high-speed expendable aerial target (HEAT) drone being built by the Aeronautical Development Establishment of the DRDO for the Indian Armed Forces.
- High-speed Expendable Aerial Target (HEAT) offers a realist threat scenario for the practice of weapon systems.
- ABHYAS is designed for autonomous flying with the help of an autopilot.
- A Luneburg lens in the nose cone improves the Radar cross-section of the target for weapon practice.
- It also has an Acoustic Miss Distance Indicator (AMDI) to indicate the miss distance.
- The configuration of 'Abhyas' is designed on an in-line small gas turbine engine and it uses indigenously developed micro-electro-mechanical systems-based system for navigation and guidance.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source- The Hindu

2. Thrissur Pooram festival: Kerala

- Thousands of people gathered to witness the grand opening of the famed Thrissur Pooram, considered as the mother of all temple festivals.
- 'Thechikkottukavu Ramachandran', the controversial elephant which was earlier denied permission to take part in the festivities by the authorities on health grounds, 'opened' the annual festival at the ancient Vadakkumnathan temple here.
- The ban had been enforced after it killed two persons on February 8.

Related Information

Thrissur Pooram

- Thrissur Pooram is an annual festival held in Kerala, India.
- It is held at the Vadakkunnathan Temple in Thrissur every year on the Pooram.
- It is the largest and most famous of all poorams.

- The main event of the annual 'pooram' begins with the 10.5 foot tall elephant pushing open the gate of the temple.
- Thrissur Pooram was the brainchild of Raja Rama Varma, famously known as Sakthan Thampuran, the Maharaja of Cochin (1790–1805).
- This festival unifies the 10 temples situated around Vadakkunnathan Temple and organized the celebration of Thrissur Pooram as a mass festival.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

3. CTBTO invites India to be an observer at meetings

- The executive secretary of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), Lassina Zerbo, has invited India to be an observer in the CTBT.

Related Information

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO)

- It is an international organization that will be established upon the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, a Convention that outlaws nuclear test explosions.
- The organization will be tasked with verifying the ban on nuclear tests and will operate therefore a worldwide monitoring system and may conduct on-site inspections.
- It was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 September 1996.
- It's headquartered in Vienna, Austria.

Status of Treaty

- It has not entered into force, as eight specific states have not ratified the treaty.
- India, North Korea and Pakistan have not signed or ratified the treaty.
- China, Egypt, Iran, Israel and the United States have signed but have not ratified.
- The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty will enter into force 180 days after the Treaty has been ratified by 44 States, listed in Annex 2 of the Treaty, which were designated to have a nuclear reactor or at least some advanced level of nuclear technology.

- When the Treaty enters into force it provides a legally binding norm against nuclear testing.

Topic-GS Paper 2–International Organisation
Source- The Hindu

4. MANAV: Human Atlas

- It is a project funded by Department of Biotechnology, which aims at creating a database network of all tissues in the human body from the available scientific literature.
- It is a project for mapping every tissue of the human body to help better understand the roles of tissues and cells linked to various diseases.
- The student community, who will be the backbone on assimilating the information, will be trained and imparted with skills to perform annotation and curation of information that will ultimately form the online network.
- The programme will involve gaining better biological insights through physiological and molecular mapping, develop disease models through predictive computing and have a wholistic analysis and finally drug discovery.
- The collected data can be useful for future researchers and clinicians and drug developers who finally handle human bodies in disease conditions.
- The database will also come in handy in tracing causes of disease, understanding specific pathways and ultimately decoding how the body's disease stage is linked to tissues and cells.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source-Live Mint

5. NASA dubs 2024 Moon mission 'Artemis'

- NASA Administrator needs an additional USD 1.6 billion to pay for the new ground and space vehicles needed to meet the deadline of Mission ARTEMIS.

Related Information

ARTEMIS Mission

- ARTEMIS is "Acceleration, Reconnection, Turbulence and

Electrodynamics of the Moon's Interaction with the Sun".

- According to the scientists NASA's ARTEMIS mission help to learn more about the
 - Earth-moon Lagrange points,
 - the solar wind,
 - the Moon's plasma wake and how the Earth's magnetotail
 - The moon's own weak magnetism interacts with the solar wind.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

6. 'Russian poplar' seeds cause May illness in Kashmir?

- In May every year, hospitals and doctors in the Kashmir Valley find themselves treating a high number of patients, especially children, with respiratory diseases.
- The rise in illness has often been attributed to a phenomenon during this season which is the shedding of fluffy cotton-covered seeds by poplar trees commonly known as "Russian poplars".

Related Information

Russian Poplar

- The name "Russian poplar" is a misnomer and has nothing to do with Russia.
- The Russian poplar trees were introduced in Kashmir in 1982 from the US under a World Bank-aided social forestry scheme.
- The species takes less time (10-15 years) to grow, as compared to the Kashmir poplar that takes 30-40 years.
- Due to their high yield, poplars are intensively used in the timber and construction industry.
- However, during summers, female poplar sheds a cotton-like material carrying seeds that cause allergies and aggravate respiratory disorders.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- Indian Express

7. Odisha CM demanded special category status for the state

- Odisha chief minister has demanded special category status from Central Government for his disaster-prone state.
- He said that Odisha faces natural calamities almost every year.

Related Information

What is Special Category Status (SCS)?

- The concept of SCS emerged in 1969 when the Gadgil formula (that determined Central assistance to states) was approved.
- There is no provision of special category status in the Constitution; the Central government extends financial assistance to states that are at a comparative disadvantage against others.
- The NDC (National Development Council) granted this status based on a number of features of the States which include-
 - (a) Hilly and difficult terrain
 - (b) Low population density or the presence of sizeable tribal population
 - (c) Strategic location along international borders
 - (d) Economic and infrastructural backwardness
 - (e) Non-viable nature of State finances.
- Special status is guaranteed by the Constitution of India through an Act passed by the two-third majority in both houses of the Parliament, as in the case of Jammu and Kashmir, whereas Special Category Status is granted by the National Development Council (NDC), an administrative body of the government.

What kind of assistance does the SCS States receive?

- The central government allocates 30 percent of its plan expenditure to these States as late as 2009-10. (Gadgil-Mukherjee formula).
- Following the constitution of the NITI Aayog and the recommendation Central plan assistance to the SCS States has been subsumed in an increased devolution of the divisible pool to all States (from 32% in the 13th FC recommendations to 42%)

and do not any longer appear in plan expenditure.

- The 14 FC also recommended variables such as "forest cover" to be included in devolution, with a weightage of 7.5 in the criteria and which could benefit north-eastern States that were previously given SCS assistance.
- Assistance to Centrally Sponsored Schemes for the SCS States was given with 90% Central share and 10% State share.

What other States are seeking SCS status?

- Apart from Odisha, Bihar and Andhra Pradesh also demanding SCS status but they have not been granted the same as they did not meet the criteria.

How many states have been provided SCS status?

- NDC has accorded 11 states, out of 29 states, the status of "Special Category States" to target the fund flow for better-balanced growth.
- They are-
 - (a) Seven States of North-Eastern region (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura)
 - (b) Sikkim
 - (c) Jammu & Kashmir
 - (d) Himachal Pradesh
 - (e) Uttarakhand.
- Jammu & Kashmir was the first state to get special category status, and another 10 states were added over the years, with Uttarakhand being the last in 2010.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- Indian Express

15.05.2019

1. India to co-chair Consultative Group (CG) of GFDRR
- Recently India is unanimously chosen as co-chair of the Consultative Group (CG) of Global Facility for Disaster Reduction and Recovery (GFDRR) for the fiscal year 2020.
- The CG Meeting was co-chaired by Africa Caribbean and Pacific Group of

States, the European Union and World Bank.

Related Information

GFDRR

- It is a global partnership that helps developing countries better understand and reduce their vulnerability to natural hazards and climate change.
- GFDRR is a grant-funding mechanism, managed by the World Bank that supports disaster risk management projects worldwide.
- India became a member of CG of GFDRR in 2015.
- India's candidature was backed by its consistent progress in disaster risk reduction (DRR) in the country and its initiative to form a coalition on disaster resilient infrastructure.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – International Organisation

Source-PIB + AIR

2. DNA database coming up for Indian rhino

- The Union Environment Ministry has started a project to create DNA profiles of all rhinos in India which should be completed in 2021.
- The Indian rhino could be the first wild animal species in India to have all its members DNA-sequenced once it completed.
- The project is supported by World Wide Fund for Nature-India and the Wildlife Institute of India.
- The project is a subset of recently launched National Rhino Conservation Strategy for India.

Related Information

Rhino

- The Great one horned Rhinoceros (Indian rhinoceros) is found in the Indian subcontinent.
- IUCN status – Vulnerable

India approached towards the Protection of Rhino

- Indian Rhino Vision 2020 programme to protect and increase the population of the one-horned rhinoceros was launched in 2005,
- The programme was launched by Assam Forest Department in partnership with WWF-India, the

International Rhino Foundation and US Fish & Wildlife Service.

- It aims to attain a wild population of at least 3,000 greater one-horned rhinos spread over seven protected areas in Assam by the year 2020.
- India has signed the New Delhi Declaration on Asian Rhinos 2019.
- Under the declaration, India will collaborate with Bhutan, Nepal, Indonesia and Malaysia for conservation and protection of three Asian rhino species- Greater one-horned rhinoceros, Javan rhinoceros and Sumatran rhinoceros.
- The population of these rhino species will be reviewed every 4 years to reassess the need for joint actions to secure their future.

Note:

- The Wildlife Institute of India is an autonomous institution under the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate change.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- The Hindu

3. India finds OECD index for services trade faulty

- A study commissioned by the Commerce Ministry revealed that India has found problems with the current method under which the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) ranks countries based on their services trade policies, indicating the outcomes are biased and counter-intuitive.

Related Information

OECD Services Trade Restrictiveness Index (STRI)

- It is a unique, evidence-based tool that provides information on regulations affecting trade in services in 22 sectors across all OECD member countries and Brazil, the People's Republic of China, Costa Rica, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Russian Federation, and South Africa.
- The index was launched in 2014.
- These countries and sectors represent over 80% of global trade in services.

- The STRI toolkit can support policymakers to scope out reform options, benchmark them relative to global best practice, and assess their likely effects.

OECD

- It is an international economic organisation of 34 countries to stimulate economic progress and world trade.
- It is a forum of countries committed to democracy and the market economy.
- It provides a common platform for members to compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practices etc.
- Its headquarter is in Paris, France.

Topic-GS Paper 2 – International Organisation

Source- Economics Times

4. The issue over Bt Brinjal

- Recently, the senior advocate has sent a legal notice to Union Environment Minister asking for a freeze on all genetically modified organisms (including Bt Brinjal) including field trials.
- This notice comes in the backdrop of activist groups had said that they had found evidence of Bt Brinjal being grown in a farmer's field in Haryana.

Related Information

Bt Brinjal

- The Bt brinjal refers to a group of transgenic brinjals created by inserting a crystal protein gene (Cry1Ac) from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* into the genome of various brinjal cultivars.
- This was developed to give resistance against lepidopteran insects, in particular, the Brinjal Fruit and Shoot Borer.
- It was developed by Mahyco (Maharashtra Hybrid Seeds Company) in collaboration with the Dharwad University of Agricultural Sciences and the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University.

Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC)

- It functions under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.
- It is responsible for the appraisal of activities involving large scale use of hazardous microorganisms and recombinants in research and industrial production from the environmental angle.
- The committee is also responsible for the appraisal of proposals relating to the release of genetically engineered organisms and products into the environment including experimental field trials.

GM crops

- Genetically modified crops are plants used in agriculture, the DNA of which has been modified using genetic engineering techniques.
- The aim is to introduce a new trait to the plant which does not occur naturally in the species.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- Indian Express

5. Home Ministry cancels the registration of Infosys Foundation over FCRA violation

- The Home Ministry has cancelled the registration of Bengaluru-based NGO Infosys Foundation for alleged violation of norms in receiving foreign grants under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act.

Related Information

Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010

- It regulates the receipt and usage of foreign contribution by non-governmental organisations in India.
- Foreign contribution' include currency, article other than a gift for personal use and securities received from a foreign source.
- It is implemented by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- The intent of the Act is to prevent the use of foreign contribution or foreign hospitality for any activity detrimental to the national interest.
- It is applicable to a natural person, body corporate, all other types of

Indian entities (whether incorporated or not) as well as NRIs and overseas branches/subsidiaries of Indian companies and other entities formed or registered in India.

- All non-government organisations (NGOs) are mandatorily required to be registered under or FCRA to receive foreign funding.

Eligibility for NGO's

- In order to be registered under the FCRA, an NGO must be in existence for at least three years and must have undertaken reasonable activity in its field for which the foreign contribution is proposed to be utilised.
- Further, it must have spent at least INR 1,000,000 over three years preceding the date of its application on its activities.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- Indian Express

6. Quick, cheap diagnostic test for Haemophilia A

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR)'s National Institute of Immunohaematology, Mumbai, has developed a cost-effective Point-of-Care (POC) diagnostic test for severe Haemophilia A and Von Willebrand Disease.
- POC is the world's first test for specific diagnosis of any common bleeding disorder.

Related Information

Haemophilia

- It is a genetic disorder in which the ability of blood to clot is severely reduced so that even a minor injury can cause severe bleeding.
- It is a rare disorder worldwide which is of two types
 - Haemophilia A which occurs in about 1 in 5,000 births
 - Haemophilia B is even rarer at about 1 in about 20,000 births.
- Men are more vulnerable than women because Haemophilia is caused by a defect in the X chromosome.

Treatments for haemophilia

- There's no cure for haemophilia, but treatment usually allows a person with the condition to enjoy a good quality of life.

Von Willebrand Disease

- It is also a genetic disorder caused by missing or defective Von Willebrand factor (VWF), a clotting protein.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

7. Coastal Regulation Zone: How rules for building along the coast have evolved

- The Supreme Court ordered the demolition of five apartment complexes in Maradu municipality in Ernakulam, Kerala, for violating Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) norms.
- While the CRZ Rules are made by the Union Environment Ministry, implementation is supposed to be done by state governments through their Coastal Zone Management Authorities.
- The states are also supposed to frame their own coastal zone management plans in accordance with the central Rules.

CRZ Rules

- CRZ Rules govern human and industrial activity close to the coastline, in order to protect the fragile ecosystems near the sea.
- The Rules, mandated under the Environment Protection Act, 1986, were first framed in 1991.
- They sought to restrict certain kinds of activities, like large constructions, setting up of new industries, storage or disposal of hazardous material, mining, or reclamation and bunding, within a certain distance from the coastline.
- In all CRZ Rules, the regulation zone has been defined as the area up to 500 m from the high-tide line.

Evolution of Rules

- The Centre notified fresh CRZ Rules in 2011, which addressed some concerns.
- After even these Rules were found inadequate, however, the Environment Ministry in 2014 set up a six-member committee under then

16.05.2019

Earth Sciences Secretary Shailesh Nayak to give suggestions for a new set of CRZ Rules. The committee submitted its report in 2015.

- Simultaneously, the Chennai-based National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management defined a new high-tide line along India's entire coastline to remove ambiguities.
- Separately, the Survey of India defined a hazard line along the coasts — to be used mainly for disaster management planning.
- Based on these and other inputs, the Environment Ministry issued fresh CRZ Rules in December 2018, which removed certain restrictions on building, streamlined the clearance process, and aimed to encourage tourism in coastal areas.

Current Situation

- The government notified new CRZ Rules in January 2019 with the stated objectives of promoting sustainable development and conserving coastal environments.
- For the so-called CRZ-III (Rural) areas, two separate categories have been stipulated.
- In the densely populated rural areas (CRZ-IIIA) with a population density of 2,161 per sq km as per the 2011 Census, the no-development zone is now 50 m from the high-tide level, as against the 200 m stipulated earlier.
- In the CRZ-IIIB category (rural areas with population density below 2,161 per sq km) continue to have a no-development zone extending up to 200 m from the high-tide line.
- The new Rules have a no-development zone of 20 m for all islands close to the mainland coast, and for all backwater islands in the mainland.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- Indian Express

1. India joins the global initiative "Christchurch Call to Action" to combat extremism online

- India has joined a major global initiative to combat terrorism and extremism online and secures the internet.
- The initiative - 'Christchurch call to action' - has been named after the New Zealand city where 51 people were killed in an attack on mosques.
- It was launched in Paris by India, France, New Zealand, Canada and several other countries.
- The declaration on Christchurch call to action said a free, open and secure internet is a powerful tool by which to promote connectivity, enhance social inclusiveness and foster economic growth.
- There is a need for collective efforts globally to secure the internet from terror groups.
- The dissemination of such content online has adverse impacts on the human rights of the victims, on our collective security and on people all over the world.
- As of now, there are total 17 signatory countries of this 'Christchurch Call to Action'.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

2. Govt implements "SPARROW" project for CBIC officers

- The project for online writing of Annual Performance Appraisal Report (APAR) in Smart Performance Appraisal Report Recording Online Window (SPARROW) for Group 'B' and 'C' officers of Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC) implemented recently.
- Online writing of APARs in SPARROW for IRS (C&CE) officers has already been implemented in 2016-17.
- SPARROW-CBIC is one of its kinds in terms of Scale/ number of employees

covered as far as Central Government Departments are concerned.

- It brings a complete change in APAR management of such a large number of Group 'B' & 'C' Officers/ Staff of CBIC, which would, in turn, lead to better HR Management.
- This Project leverages modern technology for enhancing the overall efficiency and morale of the huge workforce working in Central GST and Customs formations of CBIC.
- The Project is an important milestone in the journey towards digitisation and paperless working.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

3. SCTLD: A Coral disease threatens reefs of US Virgin Islands

- Corals in the US Virgin Islands have been affected by a fast-spreading disease called 'Stony Coral Tissue Loss Disease' that has previously wiped out nearly 80 percent of stony corals in Florida
- The disease is affecting a variety of reef-building coral species-many of them long-lived and appears to be spreading from reef-to-reef throughout southwestern.
- It is a bacterial disease.
- In this disease, the tissue would slough off, leaving the stark white skeleton exposed until algae colonized it

Related Information

Coral Bleaching

- Coral bleaching occurs when coral polyps expel the symbiotic algae zooxanthellae living in their tissues, causing them to turn completely white. This phenomenon is called coral bleaching.
- The pale white colour is of the translucent tissues of calcium carbonate which are visible due to the loss of pigment-producing zooxanthellae.

Some causes of Coral Bleaching

- Rise in Sea Temperature
- Ocean Acidification

- Infectious Diseases
- Solar radiation and ultraviolet radiation
- Chemical Pollution
- Human Induced Threats

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- Down to Earth

4. Nabventures launches maiden fund to back agri. food and rural start-ups

- Nabventures, a subsidiary of NABARD has announced an Rs 700-crore venture capital fund for equity investments in agriculture and rural-focused startups.
- This is the first time that the rural development bank has launched a fund of its own.

Related Information

Venture Capital Fund

- It is an investment fund that manages money from different investors seeking to provide capital in startup and small- and medium-sized enterprises that have strong growth potential.
- According to SEBI, VCF is a fund established in the form of a trust/company including a body corporate and registered with SEBI.
- The objective of the venture capital financing is to invest in high-risk projects with the anticipation of high returns.
- In India, the venture capital funds are regulated by the SEBI.

Note: NABARD is now 100 percent owned by the government, which has been focusing on startups through a slew of measures NABARD (National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development)

- The apex development financial institution in India.
- Headquarter- Mumbai
- Established in July 1982 under NABARD Act 1981.
- Formed On the recommendation of B. Sivaraman Committee.
- It is a specialised bank for Agriculture and rural development in India.

- Rural Innovation Fund and the Rural Infrastructure Development Fund have been set under NABARD.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Indian Economy

Source- The Hindu Business Line

5. World's largest radio telescope designed

- Scientists have finished designing the 'brain' of the Square Kilometre Array (SKA), the world's largest radio telescope.
- When complete, the SKA will enable astronomers to monitor the sky in unprecedented detail and survey the entire sky much faster than any system currently in existence.
- The SDP consortium, led by the University of Cambridge in the UK, has designed the elements that will together form the 'brain' of the SKA.

Topic- GS-3 Science & Technology

Source- Indian Express

6. RBI releases vision document for e-payment system

- RBI has released a vision document for ensuring a safe, secure, convenient, quick and affordable e-payment system.
- RBI release the 'Payment and Settlement Systems in India: Vision 2019 - 2021', with its core theme of 'Empowering Exceptional E-payment Experience', envisages to achieve "a highly digital and cash-lite society" through the goal posts of competition, cost-effectiveness, convenience and confidence (4Cs).
- The bank will implement the approach outlined in this Vision during the period 2019 - 2021.
- The document talks about creating customer awareness, setting up a 24X7 helpline and self-regulatory organisation for system operators and service providers, among others.
- It added that the 'no-compromise' approach towards safety and security of payment systems remains a hallmark of the vision.

Topic- GS-3- Indian Economy

Source- AIR

7. Orchids "Lecanorchis taiwaniana" Discovered in Assam

- It is one of the smallest orchids in India in terms of size and duration of bloom to be recorded botanically.
- The orchid, discovered earlier in Japan, Taiwan, and Laos, was found to have a maximum height of 40 cm and a blossoming period of five-six days.
- Lecanorchis taiwaniana is a myco-heterotroph, one of two types of parasitic plants that have abandoned photosynthesis.

Topic- GS-3- Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

8. Bio-printing

- Andhra Pradesh MedTech Zone (AMTZ) has recently organized a one-day workshop on Organ Bio Printing in Visakhapatnam.
- Andhra Pradesh MedTech Zone is one of the largest 3D printing facilities in the world with diverse materials and diverse applications.

Related Information

3D bio-printing

- Bioprinting is an additive manufacturing process where biomaterials such as cells and growth factors are combined to create tissue-like structures that imitate natural tissues.
- The technology uses a material known as bio-ink to create these structures in a layer-by-layer manner.
- The technique is widely applicable to the fields of medicine and bioengineering.
- Recently, technology has even made advancements in the production of cartilage tissue for use in reconstruction and regeneration.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source-PIB

17.05.2019

1. Voynich Manuscript: The World's most mysterious text is finally cracked

- The researcher of Bristol academic recently deciphered the language of a 600-year-old manuscript written in Voynich.
- The Voynich manuscript is a handwritten, illustrated text from the 15th century which is written on vellum (a type of parchment paper made from the skin of a lamb, goat, or calf) with text and illustrations.
- The Voynich manuscript is an example of Proto-Romance.
- The Voynich manuscript - known as the 'world's most mysterious text' - contained codes, magic spells, alien messages and even communist propaganda.
- The manuscript was compiled by Dominican nuns as a source of reference for Maria of Castile, Queen of Aragon which is an autonomous community in Spain.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture

Source- TOI

2. Centre seeks to replace EIA rules

- The Union environment ministry has decided to "re-engineer" its existing environmental impact assessment (EIA) notification which significantly dilutes the process through which projects are granted environmental clearances.
- The existing Environment impact assessment(EIA) rules, 2006 governs green clearance for all varieties of tasks such as mining, infrastructure, industries, thermal, hydro and irrigation – across the country.

New Draft Rule of EIA

- The draft rules give local bodies such as municipalities, urban development authorities and district panchayats the authority to grant building permits for building or construction projects with a built-up area of more than 20,000 sq metres and less than 50,000 sq metres.
- The draft also offers for clearance to diverse tasks such as twin

carriageway tasks in border areas, growth of existing highways and growth of existing industrial tasks without an additional acquisition of land without environment appraisal.

- It also exempted the expansion of projects up to 50% of the existing capacity in various sectors from any kind of public consultation.
- This covers modernization of irrigation projects, roads and highways where no further acquisition of land is involved.

Related Information

Environment Impact Assessment (EIA)

- It is a formal process used to predict the environmental consequences of any development project.
- EIA in India is statutorily backed by the Environment Protection Act in 1986, which contains various provisions on EIA methodology and process.
- EIA is mandatory under the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986 for 29 categories of developmental activities involving investments of Rs. 50 crores and above.
- The existing EIA, notified in 2006, currently governs green clearance for all kinds of projects - mining, infrastructure, thermal, hydro, irrigation and industries - across the country.
- In order to bring new EIA notification, the ministry had issued a proposed version of it - called 'Zero Draft' - and sought comments from all states and concerned pollution control boards by mid-May.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- The Hindu

3. Why Iswarchandra Vidyasagar matters

- He was born on September 26, 1820, in Birsingha village of Midnapore district in a poor Brahmin family.
- His most enduring contributions were as an educationist and reformer of traditional upper caste Hindu society.
- The focus of his reform was women — he spent his life's energies trying to ensure an end to the practice of child marriage and to initiate widow marriage.

- His Bengali primer, the Borno Porichoy, reconstructed the modern Bengali alphabet, and remains, more than 125 years after his death in 1891, almost every child's introduction to learning and writing the language.

Vidyasagar's rationalism

- Nineteenth-century Hinduism, Max Weber wrote in his 1916 study on The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism, had "become a compound of magic, animism and superstition".
- The humanist reformism of Raja Rammohan Roy (1772-1833), Akshay Kumar Dutt (1820-86) and Vidyasagar was shot through with powerful rationalism that rejected the decadence of contemporary Hindu society and questioned the bases of the faith in which it claimed to have its roots.
- Vidyasagar was agnostics who refused to discuss the supernatural.

Reforms for women

- In 1855, he wrote his two famous tracts on the Marriage of Hindu Widows, grounding his argument in reason and logic, showing that there was no prohibition on widows remarrying in the entire body of 'Smriti' literature (the Sutras and the Sastras).
- Alongside the campaign for widow remarriage, Vidyasagar campaigned against polygamy.
- On July 16, 1856, The Hindu Widows' Remarriage Act, known as Act XV, was passed.

Topic- GS-1- Indian History

Source- Indian Express

4. Global Drug Survey 2019

- The Global Drug Survey (GDS) is an anonymised, online survey that uses a detailed questionnaire to assess trends in drug use and self-reported harms among regular drug users and early adopters of new trends.
- The Global Drug Survey (GDS) 2019 has reported that Indians lead the world seeking help to reduce their alcohol intake. This is the first time

the survey has polled respondents from India.

- According to the survey, alcohol, tobacco and cannabis were the most common stimulants used by Indians.
- 51% of the respondents wanted to 'drink less' in the following year and 41% 'wanted help to do so'- highest among all countries.
- Also, 51% of those surveyed said they wanted to use 'less cannabis' in the following year; more than any other nationality and also above the global average of 31%.
- Further, 6% of the female Indians surveyed reported seeking 'emergency medical treatment' in the last 12 months. The global female average was about 13%.
- However, none of the males in India reported seeking medical treatment, compared to the global average of 12%.
- Indians reported 'being drunk' on an average of 41 times in the last 12 months — behind the U.K., the U.S., Canada, Australia and Denmark in that order but well above the global average of 33 times.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important report

Source- Indian Express

5. India sets the tone in Geneva as COP meetings adopt amendments to restrict e-waste dumping on developing countries

- The potential "dumping" of e-waste in India under the guise of reuse and repair, along with including the entry of mixed, contaminated plastic waste in the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) category were the two issues where India intervened at the triple COP (Conference of the Parties) meetings.
- The meetings involved conferences of the parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and were held in Geneva between April 29 and May 10 on the theme 'Clean Planet, Healthy People: Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste'.
- Major decisions were on the transboundary movement of e-waste.
- Waste from developed countries is sent to developing countries under

the guise of reuse and repair. There is no accountability on the exporting country to take these back.

- In Basel Convention, draft technical guidelines stipulated the conditions when used electrical and electronic equipment destined for direct reuse, repair, refurbishment or failure analysis should be considered as non-waste.
- The Indian delegation strongly objected the proposed decision on these guidelines during plenary and did not allow it to be passed by the conference of the parties (COP).
- Later a modified decision was adopted in which all the concerns raised by India were incorporated.
- Earlier this year, India banned the import of plastic waste in the country.

Related Information

- According to the recent study of ASSOCHAM-NEC, India continues to be generating the highest e-waste vis-à-vis China, USA, Japan and Germany.
- In India, Maharashtra contributes the largest e-waste of 19.8%, followed by Tamil Nadu (13%) and Uttar Pradesh (10.1%) respectively.
- The sad part is that a mere 5% of India's total e-waste gets recycled.
- Over 95% of e-waste generated is managed by the unorganised sector and scrap dealers in this market, dismantle the disposed of products instead of recycling it.

Topic- GS-3- Environment

Source- Indian Express

6. UNDRR confers PM's Secretary with Sasakawa Award 2019

- United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR) has conferred Sasakawa Award 2019 for Disaster Risk Reduction to Dr. Pramod Kumar Mishra, Additional Principal Secretary to Prime Minister of India.
- The award was announced during the 6th Session of Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (GPDRR) 2019 at Geneva Switzerland.

Other winners of 2019 Sasakawa Award

- Sidnei Furtado, Director of Department of Civil Defence, Campinas, Brazil.
- Bijal Brahmhatt, Director of the Mahila Housing SEWA Trust of India

Sasakawa Award

- The Sasakawa Award is the most prestigious award of the United Nations in the area of Disaster Risk Management.
- The theme of the Sasakawa Award 2019 was 'Building Inclusive and Resilient Societies'
- The winners of the award can be either organisations or individuals who are bestowed with a grant of USD 50000 as the award prize.

Topic-GS Paper 2–International Relation Source-PIB

7. Trump unveils merit-based immigration system

- US President Donald Trump has rolled out a merit-based immigration system Green Card which is the passport of permanent residence in America.
- This merit-based system immigration system help foreigners, including hundreds and thousands of Indian professionals and skilled workers, waiting to get Green Cards or permanent legal residency stand to benefit.
- The proposed system permanent legal residency would be given based on points for their age, knowledge, job opportunities and civic sense.
- The proposals significantly increase the quota for skilled workers from the existing nearly 12 per cent to 57 per cent.
- Besides, immigrants will be required to learn English and pass a civics exam prior to admission.

Related Information

Green Card

- Green card is a colloquial name for the identification card issued by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services to permanent residents, who are legally allowed to live and work in the U.S. indefinitely.

Visa for a temporary stay in America

H1 B visa

- The H-1B visa is a non-immigrant visa.

- It allows US companies to employ foreign workers in speciality occupations that require theoretical or technical expertise.
- The H1-B visa has an annual numerical limit cap of 65,000 each fiscal year, as mandated by the Congress.

H4 Visa

- The dependents of H-1B visa holders get H-4 visas.
- In 2015 US Citizenship and Immigration Services passed the Employment Authorization for Certain H-4 Dependent Spouses rule.
- Certain H-4 Dependent Spouses means spouses of H-1B visa holders whose green card applications have reached a certain milestone.
- More than 90% of the 1.26 lakh Employment Authorisation Documents (EAD) issued for H-4 visa beneficiaries since 2015 went to Indians.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- AIR

8. Xi Jinping rejects 'clash of civilisations' theory

- China's President Xi Jinping debunked the "clash of civilisations" theory and appealed for harmonious dialogue and coexistence between civilizations during 'Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations'.
- This statement came after US officials had described the rivalry between China and the US as a fight with a different civilisation and a different ideology.

Related Information

What is Clash of Civilization?

- It was proposed by American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington who argued that future wars would be fought not between countries but between cultures.
- The Clash of Civilizations is a hypothesis that people's cultural and religious identities will be the primary source of conflict in the post-Cold War world.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – International Relation

Source- Economics Times

9. Alabama, a state of USA passes toughest abortion Bill

- The Alabama, state of U.S.A. has passed the most restrictive abortion bill in the United States.
- The bill has placed a near-total ban on the termination of pregnancy even in cases of rape and incest and could punish doctors who perform the procedure with life imprisonment.

Provision of the bill

- Under the bill, performing an abortion is a crime that could land doctors who perform such surgeries in prison for 10 to 99 years.
- Abortions would only be legal if the life of the mother is in danger or if the foetus has a fatal condition.

Related Information

Indian Perspective

- Indian law allows abortion if the continuance of the pregnancy would involve a risk to the life of the pregnant woman or grave injury to her physical or mental health.
- The Supreme Court has said that the right to privacy is implicit in Article 21 of the Constitution and a right to abortion can be read from this right.
- The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act 1971 provides guarantees with the Right of Women in India to terminate an unintended pregnancy by a registered medical practitioner in a hospital established or maintained by the Government or a place being approved for the purpose of this Act by the Government.
- Not all pregnancies could be terminated.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

20.05.2019

1. Kerala became the first state to list Masala Bond in the overseas market

- Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board has become the first regional entity in India who issued Masala Bonds to raise funds from the overseas market.
- The bond has been listed on the London Stock Exchange's International Securities Market.

Related Information About Masala Bond

- Masala bonds are bonds issued by an Indian entity in a foreign market in the rupee denomination.
- It is a way for an entity to borrow from foreign investors and is due to be paid at the fixed end date.
- Masala bonds can only be issued in a country and subscribed by a resident of such a country that is a member of the Financial Action Task Force and whose securities market regulator is a member of the International Organisation of Securities Commission.
- Further, it can also be subscribed by multilateral and regional financial institutions where India is a member country.
- According to RBI, any corporate, body corporate and Indian bank is eligible to issue Masala bonds overseas.
- RBI mandates that the money raised through such bonds cannot be used for real estate activities other than for the development of integrated township or affordable housing projects.
- It also can't be used for investing in capital markets, purchase of land and on-lending to other entities for such activities as stated above.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics

Source- Economics Times

2. Rajasthan Government to revamp Ujala Clinics
 - Under revamped Ujala Clinics for adolescents, the Rajasthan government will appoint peer educators and shadow educators for counselling of youngsters and ensure better coordination with other medical and health schemes.
 - Ujala Clinics, under Rashtriya Kishor Swasthya Karyakram (RKSK), are functioning at the government health facilities in 10 districts of the State.

- It has been established at district hospitals, community health centres and selected primary health centres in Udaipur, Rajsamand, Banswara, Dungarpur, Jaisalmer, Barmer, Jalore, Bundi, Karauli and Dholpur districts.

Related Information

About Rashtriya Kishore Swasthya Karyakram

- The Ministry of Health & Family Welfare has launched this health programme for adolescents, in the age group of 10-19 years, which would target their nutrition, reproductive health and substance abuse, among other issues.
- The key principle of this programme is adolescent participation and leadership, Equity and inclusion, Gender Equity and strategic partnerships with other sectors and stakeholders.
- To guide the implementation of this programme, MOHFW in collaboration with United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) has developed a National Adolescent Health Strategy.

Target Groups

- The new adolescent health (AH) strategy focuses on age groups 10-14 years and 15-19 years with universal coverage, i.e. males and females; urban and rural; in school and out of school; married and unmarried, and vulnerable and under-served.

Objectives of Rashtriya Kishore Swasthya Karyakram

- Improving nutrition
- Improving sexual and reproductive health
- Enhancing mental health
- Prevention of injuries and violence
- Prevention of substance misuse
- Address Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) such as hypertension, stroke, cardiovascular diseases and diabetes.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

3. Centre issues drought advisory to 6 states
 - Centre has issued a drought advisory to Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Tamil Nadu and asked them to use water

judiciously as water storage in dams dropping to a critical level.

- Water falls under the state list and the advisory recommends states to use it for drinking purpose only till the dams are replenished.
- The Central Water Commission (CWC) monitors water storage available in 91 major reservoirs across the country.
- The drought advisory is issued to States when the water level in reservoirs is 20% less than the average of live water storage figures of the past 10 years.

Related Information

- According to India Meteorological Department earlier classification, “when the rainfall deficiency is more than 10% and when 20-40% area of the country is under drought conditions, then the year is termed as an All India Drought Year”.
- However, in 2016, IMD replaced the word “drought” to describe poor rainfall with “deficient year” and “large deficient year” as described below

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Disaster Management

Source-Live Mint

4. Taiwan becomes the first Asian nation to legalise same-sex marriage
- Taiwan has become the first Asian nation to legalise same-sex marriage after its parliament voted in favour of a bill granting full legal rights to gay married couples.

Related Information

Indian Laws on same-sex

- In 2018, the Supreme Court of India decriminalised homosexuality by declaring Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code unconstitutional which is a landmark judgment in India for Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

Laws on the same sex in other countries:

- Vietnam decriminalised gay marriage celebrations in 2015 but stopped short of granting full legal recognition for same-sex unions.

- While same-sex marriage is still illegal in China, homosexuality was decriminalised in the country in 1997, and officially removed from its list of mental illnesses three years later.
- Brunei announced strict new Islamic laws that made anal sex and adultery offences punishable by stoning to death, but it says it will not enforce the death penalty for gay sex.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- TOI

5. Navy boosts its air warfare capability

- The Indian Navy has successfully test-fired a Medium Range Surface to Air Missile (MRSAM).
- The test-firing of the missile was carried out jointly by the Indian Navy, Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and Israel Aerospace Industries.

Related Information

About Medium Range Surface to Air Missile

- The DRDO has jointly developed the missile in collaboration with Israel Aerospace Industries
- The MRSAM has been manufactured by Bharat Dynamics Limited.
- The MRSAM has the capability of providing defence against air, marine and ground threats.
- This capability significantly enhances the combat effectiveness of the Indian Navy thereby providing an operational edge over potential adversaries.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Defence

Source- The Hindu

6. E-payments panel submits report to RBI

- The high-level committee on deepening digital payments, headed by former chairman of UIDAI Nandan Nilekani, submitted its report to Reserve Bank of India governor.

Related Information

- The central bank had set up the five-member panel on deepening digital payment with a view to encourage digitisation of payments and enhance

financial inclusion through digitisation.

- The panel was asked to
 - review the existing status of digitisation of payments in the country.
 - identify the current gaps in the ecosystem and suggesting ways to bridge them
 - assess the current levels of digital payments in financial inclusion.
- Recently, RBI had released a vision document for ensuring a safe, secure, convenient, quick and affordable e-payment system with an aim making India a 'cash-lite' society.
- The 'Payment and Settlement Systems in India: Vision 2019 – 2021', with its core theme of 'Empowering Exceptional (E)payment Experience', envisages achieving "a highly digital and cash-lite society" through the goal posts of competition, cost-effectiveness, convenience and confidence (4Cs).

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics

Source- Indian Express

7. Refurbished mobile imports certified by BIS get govt nod
- India government has finally allowed the import of refurbished or second-hand mobile phones, subject to the condition that they are certified by the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).

Related Information

About the Bureau of Indian Standards

- The Bureau of Indian Standards is the National Standards Body of India working under the aegis of Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution.
- BIS was established by the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 1986.
- The Minister in charge of the Ministry or Department having administrative control of the BIS is the ex-officio President of the BIS.
- BIS is mandated for the harmonious development of activities of standardization, marking and quality certification of goods and for matters connected

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important institutions

Source- The Hindu Business Line

8. RISAT-2B: An all-seeing radar imaging satellite
- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) will be launching the 48th mission of the PSLV series — PSLV-C46 with RISAT-2B, the satellite which will be the first in a new array of Indian all-seeing radar imaging satellites to be deployed after seven years.

Related Information

About RISAT-2B

- RISAT-2B, short for "Radar Imaging Satellite-2B", is the second in a series of satellites used to observe weather conditions on Earth using radar imagery.
- Once operational, the satellite will be capable of monitoring weather day and night, in all weather conditions.
- RISAT-2's main sensor is X-band synthetic aperture radar from Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI).
- It is designed to monitor India's borders and as part of anti-infiltration and anti-terrorist operations.
- The satellite has a mass of 300 kilograms
- RISAT-2B is to be followed by RISAT-2BR1, 2BR2, RISAT-1A, 1B, 2A and so on

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science & Technology

Source- The Hindu

9. Arunachal has 35 % of India's graphite deposits, says GSI
- The Geological Survey of India, GSI, has revealed that 35 per cent of the country's Graphite deposits of the country is found in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The GSI's 2013 report showed Arunachal Pradesh sits on 43% of the country's graphite resources followed by Jammu & Kashmir (37%), Jharkhand (6%), Tamil Nadu (5%), and Odisha (3%).
- However, in terms of reserves, Tamil Nadu holds the leading share of about 37%, followed by Jharkhand (30%) and Odisha (29%).

Related Information

About Graphite

- Graphite is a naturally-occurring form of crystalline carbon.
- It is a native element mineral found in metamorphic and igneous rocks.
- It is extremely soft, cleaves with very light pressure, and has a very low specific gravity.
- Under high pressures and temperatures, it converts to diamond.
- Graphite is used in pencils and lubricants.
- Its high conductivity makes it useful in electronic products such as electrodes, batteries, and solar panels.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- AIR

21.05.2019

1. India cuts off UN panel after J&K report
 - Recently India has informed the United Nations body that it will no longer entertain any communication with the HRC's Special Rapporteurs on its report.

Related Information

Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council

- The Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council are independent human rights experts with mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific perspective.
- Special procedures are either an individual (called "Special Rapporteur" or "Independent Expert") or a working group composed of five members, one from each of the five United Nations regional groupings: Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and the Western group.
- They are appointed by the Human Rights Council and serve in their personal capacities.
- They are not United Nations staff members and do not receive financial remuneration.

About United Nations Human Rights Council

- It is an inter-governmental body within the UN system.
- It is responsible for promoting and protecting human rights around the world.
- UNHRC has 47 seats with a term of 3 years. No member may occupy a seat for more than 2 consecutive terms.
- The UN General Assembly elects the members by absolute majority.
- The UNHRC is the successor to the UN Commission on Human Rights and is a subsidiary body of the UN General Assembly.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –International Organisation

Source- The Hindu

2. BUILD program to shape the future of Indian aerospace
 - Boeing announced that it is launching a Boeing University Innovation Leadership Development (BUILD) programme for university students, faculty and early-stage start-ups for nurturing innovation and skill development in the country.

Related Information

About BUILD Program

- The BUILD program will help innovators convert their ideas into viable business offerings that have the potential to shape the future of Indian aerospace and defence.
- It will provide a platform for students and entrepreneurs to not only benefit from our vast experience and partner networks, but also develop their ideas into path-breaking innovations.

About Boeing

- The Boeing Company is an American multinational corporation that designs, manufactures, and sells aeroplanes, rotorcraft, rockets, satellites, and missiles worldwide.
- Boeing is among the largest global aerospace manufacturers; it is the fifth-largest defence contractor in the world based on 2017 revenue.
- Its Headquarters is in Chicago, Illinois, U.S.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

3. World gets redefined units of measurement
 - The General Conference on Weights and Measures at the International Bureau of Weights and Measures has unanimously adopted the resolution to redefine four of the seven base units.
 - The units redefined are- kilogram (SI unit of weight), Kelvin (SI unit of temperature), mole (SI unit of amount of substance), and ampere (SI unit of current).
 - It has enabled scientists and researchers to base the SI units entirely on fundamental properties of nature, which will ensure their refinement and improvement in the future.
 - Earlier the Kilogram is derived its origin from a weight of a block of a platinum-iridium alloy housed at the International Bureau of Weights and Measures in France.
 - Now the Kilogram will be based on the definition of the Planck Constant, a constant of nature that related to how matter releases energy.
 - Kibble Balance is a device that was used to measure the Planck Constant and thereby reboot the kilogram will be manufactured by CSIR-National Physical Laboratory (NPL).
 - The new SI is being implemented worldwide from 20th May 2019 i.e. the World Metrology Day.
 - CSIR-NPL also published a book entitled, "Redefined SI Units and Glimpses of NPL Metrological Activities", to percolate and disseminate the information accommodating details on new changes, posters, and documents.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and technology

Source-PIB

4. India, Pakistan to attend SCO meets
 - Indian and Pakistani Foreign Ministers will together attend a ministerial meeting under the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Bishkek, the Kyrgyz Republic after the

Pulwama terror attack and the Balakot airstrikes.

Related Information

Shanghai Cooperation Organization

- It is a Eurasian political, economic, and military organisation which was founded by the leaders of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- Current member states (8) - China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India and Pakistan.
- Observer States (4) - Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia.
- Dialogue Partners (6) - Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey, Sri Lanka.
- The official working languages of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation are Chinese and Russian.
- The SCO Secretariat, based in Beijing, is the main permanent executive body of the SCO

About Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure

- It is a permanent organ of the SCO which serves to promote cooperation of member states against terrorism, separatism and extremism.
- It's headquartered in Tashkent, Uzbekistan,

Topic-GS Paper 2-International Organisation

Source- Indian Express

5. CDSCO issues alert on pacemakers
 - A nationwide alert will be announced by the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) on some faulty pacemaker's models sold by the world's largest medical device manufacturer, Medtronic.

Related Information

About Central Drugs Standard Control Organization

- It is the national regulatory body for Indian pharmaceuticals and medical device.
- It functions under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act.
- CDSCO comes under Directorate General of Health Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- CDSCO is responsible for
 - approval of New Drugs

- o Conduct of Clinical Trials,
- o laying down the standards for Drugs
- o control over the quality of imported Drugs in the country.

About Pacemaker

- A pacemaker or artificial pacemaker is a medical device that generates electrical impulses delivered by electrodes to contract the heart muscles and regulate the electrical conduction system of the heart which is same as a natural pacemaker.
- The primary purpose of a pacemaker is to maintain an adequate heart rate.

Topic-GS Paper 2–Important Institutions
Source- Live Mint

6. United Nations not a State under Article 12
- Recently the Delhi High Court has given judgement in Sanjaya Bahel v. Union of India & Others case, ruled that the United Nations is not a State under Article 12 of the Constitution of India and is not amenable to its jurisdiction under Article 226 of the Constitution.
- The judgment was passed on a petition concerning the immunity enjoyed by the UN under the United Nations (Privileges and Immunities) Act, 1947.
- The petitioner was a former UN employee who was found guilty of misconduct and was sentenced to 97 months of imprisonment. After serving his sentence, the petitioner was deported to India.

Related Information
Article 12

- According to Article 12 of the Constitution of India, the term 'State' denotes the union and state governments, the Parliament and state legislatures and all local or other authorities within the territory of India or under the control of the Indian government.
- Article 226 empowers the high courts to issue writs to a person or authority, including the government.
- The writs which can be issued are mandamus, habeas corpus, prohibition, quo warranto and certiorari.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- Indian Express

7. Evidence of water found on Ultima Thule: NASA
- NASA has found evidence for a unique mixture of methanol, water ice, and organic molecules on the surface of the farthest ever object explored by mankind Ultima Thule.

Related Information

NASA's New Horizons Spacecraft

- NASA's New Horizons spacecraft became the first explorer to fly past the mysterious object-Ultima Thule, located some 4billion miles from Earth.
- New Horizon's core science mission is to map the surfaces of Pluto and Charon, to study
- Pluto's atmosphere and to take temperature readings.

About Ultima Thule

- Ultima Thule is located in the Kuiper belt in the outermost regions of the Solar System, beyond the orbit of Neptune.
- It measures approximately 30 km in diameter and is irregularly shaped.
- Ultima Thule has a reddish colour, probably caused by exposure of hydrocarbons to sunlight over billions of years.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu Business Line

8. World Trade Organisations Appellate Body

- The World Trade Organization's (WTO's) dispute settlement mechanism is going through a "crisis": the body is struggling to appoint new members to its understaffed Appellate Body that hears appeals in trade.

Related Information

About WTO's Appellate Body

- The Appellate Body, set up in 1995, is a standing committee of seven members that presides over appeals against judgments passed in trade-related disputes brought by WTO members.

- The Appellate Body can uphold, modify or reverse the legal findings and conclusions of a panel, and Appellate Body Reports, once adopted by the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB), must be accepted by the parties to the dispute.
- DSB monitors the implementation of the rulings and recommendations and has the power to authorize retaliation when a country does not comply with a ruling.
- DSB has to accept or reject the appeals and again the rejection is only possible by consensus.
- Countries on either or both sides of the dispute can appeal.
- The Appellate Body has its seat in Geneva, Switzerland.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – International organization

Source- TOI

9. Joko Widodo elected President of Indonesia for the second term

- Indonesia's Joko Widodo has been re-elected as president of the country, beating rival Prabowo Subianto, a retired general.
- he won the election by a 55.5 per cent to 44.5 per cent margin over Subianto and Sandiaga Uno.

Topic- State PCS exams

Source- News on AIR

22.05.2019

1. Pakistan needs aggressive diplomacy to exit FATF greylist
 - Financial Action Task Force has said that Pakistan needs to launch an aggressive diplomatic effort to secure enough support to come out of the grey list or prevent itself from falling into the black list.
 - This statement came during a two-day meeting of the Asia-Pacific Group (APG) of the Paris-based global watchdog FATF in the southern Chinese city of Guangzhou.
 - In June 2018, FATF had placed Pakistan on the grey list of countries.
 - Pakistan was put on the greylist after its domestic laws were considered weak to tackle the challenges of

money laundering and terrorism financing.

Related Information

About the Financial Action Task Force

- It is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 on the initiative of the G7.
- It is a policy-making body which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas.
- Its secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris, France.

Objectives of the FATF

- to set standards and promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures
- for combating money laundering
- terrorist financing and
- other related threats to the integrity of the international financial system.
- The FATF currently comprises 36 members with voting powers and two regional organizations (the European Commission and the Gulf Cooperation) representing most of the major financial centres in all parts of the globe.

Topic-GS Paper 2–International Organisation

Source- Times of India

2. Man Booker International Prize

- Oman author Jokha Alharthi has won the prestigious Man Booker International Prize for his book for "Celestial Bodies".
- Celestial Bodies is the story of three sisters of a desert country confronting its slave-owning past and a complex modern world.

Related Information

Man Booker International Prize

- The Man Booker International Prize is an international literary award hosted in the United Kingdom.
- Man Booker International Prize is counterpart to Man Booker Prize for English-language novels presented by the Man Group.
- It is open to books in any language that has been translated into English.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Awards and prizes

Source- AIR

3. RBI against special NBFC window

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is not keen on offering a lifeline to stressed non-banking finance companies (NBFCs), despite strong pitch by NITI Aayog and industry players.
- NITI Aayog has made a strong case before RBI for a special lending window for NBFCs to tide over a cash crunch in the wake of IL&FS crisis which has made banks wary of funding the sector.

Related Information

About Non-Banking Financial Company

- A Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) is a company registered under the Companies Act, 1956.
- It engaged in the business of loans and advances, acquisition of shares, stock, bonds, hire-purchase insurance business or chit-fund business.
- It does not include any institution whose principal business includes agriculture, industrial activity or the sale, purchase or construction of the immovable property.
- The working and operations of NBFCs are regulated by the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.
- As per the new norms, NBFCs cannot outsource core management functions like internal audit, management of investment portfolio, strategic and compliance functions for knowing your customer (KYC) norms and sanction of loans.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Banking

Source- Economics Times

4. Government plans to introduce artificial intelligence system in MCA 21 portal

- The Government plans to introduce artificial intelligence system in the MCA 21 portal as it seeks to make compliance process easier as well as ensure routine enforcement activities are done round-the-clock on autopilot basis.

Related Information

About MCA 21

- MCA21 is an e-Governance initiative of Ministry of Company Affairs (MCA), Government of India that enables an easy and secure access of the MCA

services to the corporate entities, professionals and citizens of India.

Objective

- The MCA21 application is designed to fully automate all processes related to the proactive enforcement and compliance of the legal requirements under the Companies Act, 1956, New Companies Act, 2013 and Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008.
- This will help the business community to meet their statutory obligations.

Benefits

The MCA21 application offers the following.

- Enables the business community to register a company and file statutory documents quickly and easily.
- Provides easy access to public documents
- Helps faster and effective resolution of public grievances
- Ensures proactive and effective compliance with relevant laws and corporate governance
- Enables the MCA employees to deliver best of breed services

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Economics Times

5. Env Min to display photos of highly endangered animals at airports to check their illegal trade

- The environment minister has displayed these photos under the campaign 'Not all animals migrate by choice' which has been launched ahead of the International Day of Biological Diversity.

Related Information

About the campaign 'Not all animals migrate by choice'

- It is an awareness campaign launched by UN Environment India and Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) of India ahead of the International Day of Biological Diversity celebrated on May 22.
- This campaign to be displayed at major airports across the country.
- In the first phase of the campaign, Tiger, Pangolin, Star Tortoise and Tokay Gecko have been chosen as they are highly endangered due to illegal trading in International markets.

Conservation status

- The tiger is listed as Endangered on the IUCN Red List
- Chinese Pangolin is Critically Endangered under the IUCN Red List.
- Star tortoise is Vulnerable under the IUCN Red List.
- Tokay Gecko is Least Concern under the IUCN Red List.

Wildlife Crime Control Bureau

- Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) a statutory body established by the Government of India to combat wildlife crime.
- It was constituted through the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 1972.
- In 2018 the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has awarded the Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB) of India for its excellent work in combating trans-boundary environmental crimes.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment and Biodiversity

Source- Indian Express

6. After RBI, SEBI & IRDAI launch initiatives to boost startups

- Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) have announced sandbox initiative to encourage startups in their segments by making data and systems available to them.
- The initiative is similar to the RBI regulatory sandbox where startups could test out new financial products in real-time with limited regulations.
- In IRDAI sandbox, the applicant (an insurance company/broker or individual) should have a net worth of Rs 10 lakh and standing of one financial year.

Related Information

About Sandbox

- A sandbox is an enabling infrastructure or interface which is made available to an outside innovator or fintech by a bank so that they can test their product and services in real time.

- This live testing reduces the time to go to the market and also allows room for failure without actually going for a commercial launch.
- SEBI has named the sandbox initiative as Innovation Sandbox.
- Innovation Sandbox is a shared workspace to ideate, explore new subjects, develop technologies and share knowledge.
- It aims to create an ecosystem which promotes innovation in the securities market.
- This space allows fintech firms which are not registered with SEBI to be a part of the sandbox.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics

Source- Economics Times

7. New plants species with healing properties found in Manipur

- The research team from North Eastern Regional Institute of Sciences and Technology interviewed 27 healers of the Zeliangrong ethnic group in Manipur which will help the scientists to identified new plants species in Manipur, whose medicinal or pharmacology properties were not known yet.

Related Information

About Zeliangrong ethnic group

- Zeliangrong ethnic group is one of the 32 tribes in Manipur, living in the Tamenglong district.
- It comprises of three groups- Zeme, Liangmai and Rongmei - collectively known as Zeliangrong.
- They are also known for their medicinal knowledge.

Note : Ethnobotany is the study of a region's plants and their practical uses through the traditional knowledge of a local culture & people.

Topic- GS Paper 1 –Art and Culture; Important for State PCS

Source- Down to Earth

8. ISRO launches earth observation satellite RISAT-2B

- ISRO has successfully launched its earth observation satellite RISAT-2B from Sriharikota.
- ISRO's trusted workhorse PSLV-C46 carrying RISAT-2B blasted off from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre.

- ISRO said the images taken by RISAT-2B would be used for applications in agriculture, forestry and disaster management support.
- But services of such satellites are also in great demand from national security agencies as well.
- Two satellites in RISAT series have earlier been launched by ISRO.
- RISAT-2 was the first one to be launched, in 2009, while RISAT-1, which had got delayed, was launched only in 2012.
- RISAT-1 is no longer operational.

Topic-GS Paper 3-Science & Technology
Source-The Indian Express & AIR News

23.05.2019

1. IAF successfully test fires aerial version of BrahMos
 - The Indian Air Force had recently successfully test fired the aerial version of the supersonic BrahMos cruise missile from a Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft.
 - The 2.5-tonne air-to-surface missile has a range of around 300 km, and it will significantly enhance the IAF's combat capability, military officials said.

Related Information

BrahMos Missile

- BrahMos is a supersonic cruise missile developed by BrahMos Aerospace, a joint venture between Russia's Mashinostroyeniya and India's Defence Research and Development Organisation.
- It is an air-to-surface missile has a range of around 300 km.
- It has top supersonic speed of Mach 2.8 to 3
- It has been named after two rivers Brahmaputra and Moskva (river in western Russia).
- It is two-stage missile, the first one being solid and the second one ramjet liquid propellant.
- It is self-propelled guided missile that sustains flight through aerodynamic lift.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence
Source- The Hindu

2. Crested ibises fly free in South Korea

- Crested ibises have been recently reintroduced to the wild by South Korean authorities, four decades after it went extinct on the peninsula.
- The crested ibis is listed as South Korea's National Monument number 198, but was last seen in the wild in 1979 in the demilitarized zone dividing the peninsula.

Related Information

- The crested ibis (*Nipponia nippon*), also known as the Japanese crested ibis or Toki.
- This species is the only member of the genus *Nipponia*.
- It is listed as Endangered in IUCN Red List.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity; important for state PCS exams

Source- The Hindu

3. I&B Ministry Issues Advisory regarding News and Current Affairs content on TV channels

- Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has issued an advisory regarding carrying of news and current affairs content on TV channels.
- The advisory states that in accordance with the Policy Guidelines for Uplinking of Television Channels From India, 2011, I&B Ministry gives permission for uplinking of TV channels under two categories:
 - Non-News & Current Affairs
 - News & Current Affairs.
- Non-News & Current Affairs Channel - A Non-News & Current Affairs TV channel means a channel which does not have any element of news and current affairs in its programme content
- News & Current Affairs Channel - A News & Current Affairs TV channel means a channel which has an element of news and current affairs in its programme content.
- The News Channels are mandated to carry news and current affairs content while Non-News and Current Affairs

channels are not mandated to carry any news and current affairs content.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source-PI B

4. Competition Commission of India

- The Competition Commission of India (CCI) celebrated its 10th Annual Day yesterday, i.e. on 20th May 2019 which marks the notification of the substantive enforcement provisions of the Competition Act, 2002.

Related Information

- Competition Commission of India is a statutory body of the Government of India established in 2003.
- It is responsible for enforcing Competition Act, 2002 throughout India and to prevent activities that have an appreciable adverse effect on competition in India.
- The Competition Act, 2002, as amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007 prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and mergers and acquisitions) which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Governance

Source- The Hindu Business

Line

5. Groundwater reserves estimate to be updated soon

- The Union Water Ministry is finalising an updated estimate on the state of groundwater reserves in the country.
- The groundwater assessment, last done in 2013, is a survey that samples a sliver of blocks in each State and counts how many blocks have critically low levels of water and how many are well-stocked.
- The national per capita annual availability of water has shown a reduction of 15%.
- Punjab is on the top list due “extreme” overexploitation of groundwater.

Related Information

Composite Water Management Index

- NITI Aayog has released its report on Composite Water Management Index.
- The Composite Water Management Index report is a step in a direction that aims to create awareness among people and governments about the realities of water crisis in the country.
- NITI Aayog has ranked all states in the index on the composite water management, comprising 9 broad sectors with 28 different indicators covering various aspects of ground water, restoration of water bodies, irrigation, farm practices, drinking water, policy and governance.
- The report ranks Gujarat at the top in managing its water resources in the reference year (2016-17) followed by Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra.
- The worst states include Jharkhand, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Topic- Important Index- For State PCS exams.

Source- TOI

6. West Nile fever cases in Kozhikode go unnoticed?

- A month after a boy from Malappuram died of West Nile fever in March, four cases of the infection have been reported from within the Kozhikode Corporation limits in Kerala.

Related Information

About West Nile Fever

- West Nile Virus was first isolated in a woman in the West Nile district of Uganda in 1937.
- It is a zoonotic disease caused by West Nile Virus.
- According to world Health Organization (WHO) West Nile virus transmits to humans through bites from infected Culex mosquitoes.
- Mosquitoes become infected when they feed on infected birds.
- Birds are the natural hosts of West Nile virus.
- It may also be transmitted through contact with other infected animals, their blood, or other tissues.
- No human-to-human transmission from casual contact has not been documented.

- Symptoms of the virus infection include cold, fever, fatigue and nausea. It can cause fatal neurological disease in humans.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Science & Technology
Source- The Hindu

7. The 8th edition of Indo-Myanmar coordinated Navy patrol
 - The 2019 India Myanmar coordinated patrol (IMCOR) has started in Port Blair, Andaman and Nicobar.
 - This exercise aims to address, issues of terrorism, drug trafficking, human trafficking, illegal fishing, poaching and other illegal activities inimical to the interests of both the countries.
 - This coordinated patrol exercise was started in 2013.
 - It has helped in enhancing the mutual understanding between the two countries and has also helped in improving professional interaction between the two navies for maritime interoperability.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source- Indian Express

8. WHO declares Algeria, Argentina malaria-free
 - The World Health Organization (WHO) declared Algeria and Argentina as malaria-free, with no recorded cases of indigenous transmission of the disease since 2013 and 2010 respectively.

Related Information

National Framework for Malaria Elimination

- The National Framework for Malaria Elimination (NFME) 2016-2030 outlines India's strategy for elimination of the disease by 2030.
- The framework has been developed with a vision to eliminate malaria from the country and contribute to improved health and quality of life and alleviation of poverty.

Goals of NFME

- In line with the WHO Global Technical Strategy for Malaria 2016–2030 (GTS) and the Asia Pacific Leaders Malaria Alliance Malaria Elimination Roadmap, the goals of the National Framework for Malaria Elimination in India 2016–2030 are:

- Eliminate malaria (zero indigenous cases) throughout the entire country by 2030; and
- Maintain malaria-free status in areas where malaria transmission has been interrupted and prevent re-introduction of malaria.

Objectives

- Eliminate malaria from all low (Category 1) and moderate (Category 2) endemic states/UTs (26) by 2022.
- Reduce the incidence of malaria to less than 1 case per 1000 population in all States/UTs and the districts and malaria elimination in 31 states/UTs by 2024
- Interrupt indigenous transmission of malaria in all States/ UTs (Category 3) by 2027
- Prevent re-establishment of local transmission of malaria in areas where it has been eliminated and to maintain malaria-free status of the country by 2030.

Criteria for Malaria Free Certification

- To receive WHO certification, a country has to prove that it has interrupted indigenous transmission of the disease for at least three consecutive years.
- A total of 36 countries and territories have received this WHO certification.
- The last case of indigenous malaria was reported from Algeria in 2013 and Argentina in 2010.
- The certificates will be presented on the sidelines of the 72nd session of the World Health Assembly.

Topic-GS Paper 2–International Organization

Source- Down to Earth

24.05.2019

1. Shaheen II: Pakistan ballistic missile
 - Pakistan had recently conducted a training launch of a Shaheen II ballistic missile.

Related Information

About Shaheen II

- The Shaheen-II is a land-based supersonic surface-to-surface medium-range guided ballistic missile.

- It is capable of delivering conventional and nuclear weapons.
- Its range of up to 1,500 km.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Defence

Source- The Hindu

2. Study pinpoints the source of ozone-depleting gas

- Recently an international team of researchers found that the rogue emissions of a gas CFC-11 that harm the ozone layer are coming from eastern China.
- CFC-11 is one of a class of compounds called chlorofluorocarbons that destroy atmospheric ozone.
- They are also potent greenhouse gases that contribute to atmospheric warming.
- Chlorofluorocarbons were outlawed for almost all uses by the Montreal Protocol.

Related Information

About Montreal Protocol

- It is an international treaty designed to protect the ozone layer by phasing out the production of numerous Ozone Depleting Substances that are responsible for ozone depletion.
- It was agreed on 26 August 1987 in Montreal, Canada and entered into force on 26 August 1989.
- It has undergone several amendments and Kigali amendment is the eighth amendment to this protocol.
- It has successfully curbed the 98% production of chlorofluorocarbons and other ODSs and significantly contributed to the repair of the ozone hole.
- It is legally binding on member countries and has been ratified by 197 parties making it universally ratified protocol in UN history.
- It has helped in recovering the ozone hole in Antarctica.

Vienna Convention for Protection of the Ozone Layer

- It is multilateral environmental agreement agreed upon at the 1985

Vienna Conference and entered into force in 1988.

- It is one of the most successful treaties of all time in terms of universality.
- It has been ratified by 197 states (all UN members as well as Niue, Holy See and the Cook Islands) as well as European Union.
- It does not include legally binding reduction goals for the use of CFCs, the main chemical agents causing ozone depletion

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- The Hindu

3. UAE launches 'Golden Card' scheme to woo wealthy investors, exceptional talents

- The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has launched a permanent residency scheme called as Golden Card programme.
- The Golden Card offers unprecedented benefits to the cardholders and their families while creating an attractive environment for business and growth.
- This scheme was introduced to attract wealthy individuals and exceptional talents such as doctors, engineers, scientists, students and artists.
- The Golden card visa categories include
 - real estate investors who can get a visa for 5 years
 - general investors who will be allowed visa for 10 years and
 - other entrepreneurs and talented professionals such as doctors, researchers and innovators for 10 years.
- Further, the outstanding students will also be permitted residency visas for 5 years.
- All categories of visas can be renewed upon expiry.
- This initiative will attract greater foreign investment and stimulate the local economy making it more efficient and attractive to investors.
- It will also increase the UAE's competitiveness and reaffirms the

country's position as a global incubator.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –policies of developed and developing countries

Source- The Hindu Business Line

4. Only electric 2-wheelers may be sold in the country after 2025

- The government is expected to mandate the sale of only electric three-wheelers from April 2023, while all new two-wheelers with engine capacity up to 150cc driving out of showrooms may have to be powered by electricity from April 2025.

Related Information

FAME India Scheme

- Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles in India is part of the government's two-pronged strategy launched in 2015 to place India as a key driver in the global mobility revolution.
- The strategy is to boost domestic manufacturing by insisting on a minimum of 50% local content in e-vehicles.
- It also helps to create massive size and scale for electric vehicles in the country to make the investments made in the sector viable.
- The FAME II is an expanded version of FAME I, aimed to support hybrid/electric vehicles market development and Manufacturing ecosystem.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- Economics Times

5. 'Elephant Bonds': Doubling India's exports of goods & services

- Recently, the Commerce and Industry Ministry has appointed an advisory group for increasing exports and trade.
- The advisory group was headed by economist Surjit Bhalla.

Recommendations of the panel

- The panel has suggested issuance of 'Elephant Bonds' wherein people declaring undisclosed income will have to mandatorily invest half of that amount in these securities.
- The bond would be of the 25-year sovereign bond, and the fund will be

utilized only for infrastructure projects.

- The high-level panel also recommended a host of other measures like lowering effective corporate tax rate, bringing down cost of capital and simplifying regulatory and tax framework for foreign investment funds.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics

Source- TOI

6. Golden Rice' now closer to reality

- The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and its partners, the Philippines Rice Research Institute and the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute, have successfully cultivated Golden Rice in a controlled environment on IRRI campus.

Related Information

Golden rice

- Golden rice is a variety of rice (*Oryza sativa*) produced through genetic engineering to biosynthesize beta-carotene, a precursor of vitamin A, in the edible parts of rice.
- It is intended to produce fortified food to be grown and consumed in areas with a shortage of dietary vitamin A.
- The deficiency of Vitamin A causes night blindness.

About International Rice Research Institute

- The International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) is an international agricultural research and training organization with headquarters in Los Baños, Laguna in the Philippines.
- IRRI is known for its work in developing rice varieties that contributed to the Green Revolution in the 1960s which preempted the famine in Asia.
- Its aim to reduce poverty and hunger, improve the health of rice farmers and consumers, and ensure environmental sustainability of rice farming.

Note:

- Prime Minister of India recently inaugurated the International Rice Research Institute's South Asia Regional Centre (ISARC) campus in Varanasi.

- The centre will serve as a hub for rice research and training in South Asia.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Science and technology

Source- Indian Express

7. Water experts warn of 'desertification' of Marathwada
- Economists and water experts have warned of “desertification” in the water-scarce Marathwada region of Maharashtra.
- They have further said that the water crisis in the region is a policy-induced failure.

Reasons for Desertification

- Unsustainable cropping pattern which has led to indiscriminate pumping of groundwater has depleted groundwater tables to an extent where rejuvenation has become impossible.
- Given the arid climatic conditions in Marathwada, cereal and oilseeds had been the main crops traditionally cultivated in the region.
- However, predominant crops here are soybean and Bt Cotton which are not conducive for the region.
- Sugarcane cultivation is make more worsened the situation because its sugarcane crop is a water guzzler plant.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Environment

Source- The Hindu

8. Anthropocene as Earth's new epoch
- Recently a team of scientists have voted to declare “Anthropocene” as a new chapter in the Earth’s geological history which is the move signals the end of the Holocene epoch, which began 12,000 to 11,600 years ago.
- It is coined by Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer in 2000 to denote the present geological time interval.
- Anthropocene has been used to describe humanity’s large impact on the environment like rising global temperatures, sea levels, depleting the ozone layer and acidifying oceans

which are “distinctively” altered our planet.

Related Information

Geologic time scale

- The geologic time scale (GTS) is a system of chronological dating that relates geological strata (stratigraphy) to time.
- It is used by geologists, paleontologists, and other Earth scientists to describe the timing and relationships of events that have occurred during Earth’s history.
- The table of geologic time spans, presented here, agrees with the nomenclature, dates and standard color codes set forth by the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS).

Topic- GS Paper 3–Science & Technology

Source- Down to Earth

9. Shyam Saran to be conferred with Japan's 'Order of the Rising Sun' award
- Recently, the former Indian Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran has been selected for Japan’s National Award called as ‘The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star’.
- He has been awarded for his contributions in strengthening strategic ties and enhancing mutual understanding between India and Japan.

Related Information

About Order of the Rising Sun' award

- ‘The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star’ is the Japanese government’s Second Highest National Honour.
- It was established by Japanese Emperor Meiji in 1875.
- It is awarded for an exceptional civil or military merit.

Note:

- In 2016 Bureaucrat-turned-politician N.K. Singh was also honoured with Japan’s second highest national decoration ‘The Order of the Rising

Sun, Gold and Silver Star' for his contribution in strengthening Indo-Japan ties in the field of trade and investment over the last few decades.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – International Award, important for State PCS Exams.

Source- Indian Express

27.05.2019

1. Tree Ambulance launched in Chennai

- The Vice President of India has Inaugurated 'Tree Ambulance' in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
- It was inaugurated on the occasion of the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) celebrations.
- The Tree Ambulance is an attempt to revive trees after the Cyclones Vardah (2016) and Gaja (2018) uprooted lakhs of trees in Tamil Nadu.
- The ambulance would provide services like first aid, uprooted tree planting, seed ball distribution, plant distribution, aiding tree plantation, shifting trees, survey of trees and removal of dead trees.
- A plant expert and helpers who are armed with gardening tools, water, manure and enzymes will travel in the Tree Ambulance.

Related Information

International Day for Biological Diversity

- The United Nations has proclaimed May 22 the International Day for Biological Diversity (IDB) to increase understanding and awareness of biodiversity issues.
- The theme for International Day for Biological Diversity 2019 was "Our Biodiversity, Our Food, Our Health".

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- TOI

2. One billion-year-old fungus is found to be the earth's oldest

- Recently Scientists have discovered the Oldest-known fossils of a multicellular fungus that they named Oursaphira Giralda in an Arctic region of northwestern Canada.
- This fungus is the ancestor of today's mushrooms, yeasts and moulds.

- The microscopic fossils of ancient fungus date back to the Proterozoic era.
- Until now, the oldest-known fungus fossil was one about 410 million years old from Scotland.
- Scientists have said that Fungi are the closest relatives to animals in the 'tree of life'.
- This means that, if fungi were already present around 1 billion years ago, animals also were present.
- The existence of fungi a billion years ago suggests that the organisms laid the groundwork for the first plants to colonise the land about 470 million years ago.

Related Information

About Fungi

- Fungi belong to a broad group of organisms, called eukaryotes, that possesses a clearly defined nucleus and also includes animals and plants.
- Fungi play a key role in global ecosystems such as in the organic decomposition process.
- A fundamental difference between fungi and plants is that fungi are incapable of photosynthesis, harnessing sunlight to synthesize nutrients.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Science and technology

Source- The Hindu

3. Renewable energy: Centre looking to set up a portal to disclose payment delays by DISCOMS

- The Ministry of New and Renewable Energy is considering setting up a web portal to publicly disclose payment delays to renewable energy players from power distribution companies (Discoms).
- The portal is similar to Payment Ratification and Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency (PRAAPTI) portal.
- It will help to usher in more transparency in pending payments.

Related Information

About Payment Ratification and Analysis in Power procurement for bringing Transparency portal

- It was launched by the Ministry of Power in 2018 to capture the invoicing and payment data for various long term Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) from the Generators.
- This portal captures the Invoicing and payment data for various long term PPAs from the Generators.
- This helps the stakeholders in getting month-wise and legacy data on outstanding amounts of Discoms against power purchase.
- The app also allows users to know the details related to the payments made by the DISCOMS to the power generation company and when they were made.
- It has also enabled consumers to evaluate the financial performance of their DISCOMS in terms of payments being made to the generation companies.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Energy Sector

Source- The Hindu

4. RBI to purchase govt securities under OMO
 - The Reserve Bank of India said that it will conduct an auction on June 13 to purchase government securities under Open Market Operation (OMO) for 15,000 crore to infuse durable liquidity.
 - This decision was taken as financial sector has been facing liquidity crisis ever since the Infrastructure Leasing and Financial Services Ltd (IL&FS) had defaulted in its payment obligations triggering reluctance among lenders to lend to the Non Banking Financial Company (NBFC) sector.

Related Information

Open market operations

- It is an instrument of monetary policy which involves buying or selling of government securities from or to the public and banks.
- This mechanism influences the reserve position of the banks, yield on

government securities and cost of bank credit.

- The RBI sells government securities to control the flow of credit and buys government securities to increase credit flow.
- Open market operation makes bank rate policy effective and maintains stability in government securities market.

Other important Monetary Policy Instrument
Cash Reserve Ratio

- Cash Reserve Ratio is a certain percentage of bank deposits which banks are required to keep with RBI in the form of reserves or balances.
- The higher the CRR with the RBI, the lower will be the liquidity in the system and vice versa.
- It is currently 4 %.

Statutory Liquidity Ratio

- It is defined as the ratio of the liquid assets to time and demand liabilities.
- Every financial institution has to maintain a certain quantity of liquid assets with themselves at any point of time of their total time and demand liabilities.
- These assets have to be kept in non-cash form such as G-secs precious metals, approved securities like bonds etc.
- Current SLR is 19%.

Repo Rate and Reverse Repo Rate

- Repo rate is the rate at which RBI lends to its clients generally against government securities.
- Reduction in repo rate helps the commercial banks to get money at a cheaper rate and increase in repo rate discourages the commercial banks to get money as the rate increases and becomes expensive.
- Reverse repo rate is the rate at which RBI borrows money from the commercial banks.
- The increase in the repo rate will increase the cost of borrowing and lending of the banks which will discourage the public to borrow money and will encourage them to deposit.
- As the rates are high the availability of credit and demand decreases resulting to a decrease in inflation.

- This increase in repo rate and reverse repo rate is a symbol of tightening of the policy.
- The Current Repo rate is 6% and Reverse Repo rate is 5.75%.

Topic- GS Paper 3 –Economics

Source- Indian Express

5. WHO unveils plan to tackle snakebite

- The World Health Organization unveiled a new strategy to dramatically cut deaths and injuries from snakebites.
- WHO Global Strategy targets 50% reduction in mortality and disability caused by snakebite envenoming by 2030.
- This target will be achieved through
- Ensuring access to treatment such as anti-venoms and ancillary medical care by increasing the number of manufacturers by 25% and creating a global antivenom stockpile and
- Encouraging research on new treatments, diagnostics and health device breakthroughs.

Related Information

About the Snakebite Envenoming

- In 2017, WHO had formally categorised “snakebite envenoming” as a Neglected Tropical Disease.
- The deaths and serious consequences from snake bites are entirely preventable by making High-quality snake antivenoms accessible which are included in the WHO List of essential medicines.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Health and Issue

Source-Down to Earth

6. Copper, aluminium sectors may get a raw deal if India joins RCEP, warn producers

- Ahead of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, Copper and aluminium associations in the country have sent representations to the government seeking protection from cheap imports.

Consequences of Joining RCEP

- Recently a statement came in the backdrop of RCEP countries meeting on May 24, 2019 where they are

trying to conclude a treaty that would eliminate input tariffs on about 90% of traded goods.

- If India joins the RCEP then such a move would pave the way for zero duty on imports of copper and aluminium which would cripple the domestic sector and stall further investments.

India's Concerned

- India has repeatedly advocated that the agreement needs to be comprehensive in nature.
- India is concerned about
 - (a) Trade pact will allow greater access to Chinese goods which may have an impact on the Indian manufacturing sector
 - (b) There are demands by other RCEP countries for lowering customs duties on a number of products and greater access to foreign goods in the Indian market.

Related Information

About Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership

- It is a proposed mega trade pact between the ten member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Brunei, Burma (Myanmar), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam)
- It also includes the six states with which ASEAN has existing Free trade agreements (FTA's) (Australia, China, India, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand).
- It aims to boost goods trade by eliminating most tariff and non-tariff barriers — a move that is expected to provide the region's consumers greater choice of quality products at affordable rates.
- It also seeks to liberalise investment norms and do away with services trade restrictions.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – International Organization

Source- The Hindu

6. Govt plans to merge CSO, NSSO

- The government has decided to merge the Central Statistical Organisation (CSO) and the National

Sample Survey Office (NSSO) to form a National Statistical Office (NSO).

- The move is a follow-up of a decision taken in 2005, during the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government's tenure, which was based on recommendations of the report of the National Statistical Commission, headed by former Reserve Bank of India governor C Rangarajan.
- It will help to streamline and strengthen the statistical system,

Related Information
About NSSO and CSO

- Both the wings are currently part of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- While the NSSO comes out with various sample surveys such as on consumption expenditure, employment and unemployment, the CSO releases various data such as GDP and IIP.

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- Indian Express

7. Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh declared a banned terrorist organization under UAPA
 - Bangladesh-based terror outfit — the Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) — was banned by the Centre under the anti-terror law Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967.
 - JMB allegedly involved in the 2016 terror attack at a cafe in Bangladesh's capital city Dhaka was declared as an unlawful association by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Related Information

About Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967

- It is a legislation to provide for the more effective prevention of certain unlawful activities of individuals and associations and for dealing with terrorist activities.
- The Act defines unlawful activity as any action by an individual or association which is intended to bring about cession/secession or such action as to disrupt or question the

sovereignty and territorial integrity of India.

- It was amended in 2004 to criminalise the raising of funds for a terrorist act, holding of the proceeds of terrorism, membership of a terrorist organisation, support to a terrorist organisation, and the raising of funds for a terrorist organisation.
- It was again amended in 2012 to comply with the guidelines of the Financial Action Task Force.
- The definition of "terrorist act" was expanded to include offences that threaten economic security, counterfeiting Indian currency, and procurement of weapons, etc.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source-TOI

8. Higher education to get a boost with 1.5 lakh crore action plan
 - The Ministry of Human Resource Development plans to launch an ambitious 1.5 lakh crore action plan to improve the quality and accessibility of higher education over the next five years.
 - This move will help to the implementation plan for the National Education Policy.
 - The last National Education Policy (NEP) was released in 1986, with a revision in 1992.
 - EQUIP project also helps in the quality and accessibility of higher education.

Related Information

Education Quality Upgradation and Inclusion Programme (EQUIP)

- EQUIP project was being worked on in order to bring transformational change to the Higher Education system.
- It was crafted by ten committees led by experts within the government
- Its aim to bridge the gap between policy and implementation.
- The project is made to bring transformation in the higher education system in the upcoming 5 years.

Key Focus of EQUIP

- To improve access to higher education.

- Improve the gross enrolment ration
- Improve teaching and learning processes
- Build educational infrastructure
- Improve the quality of research and innovation
- Use technology and online learning tools

Topic- GS Paper 2 –Governance

Source- The Hindu

9. Rare albino panda caught on camera in China

- A rare all-white panda has been caught on camera at a nature reserve in southwest China, showing albinism exists among wild pandas in the region

Related Information

Giant panda

- The giant panda also is known as panda bear or simply panda is a bear native to south-central China.
- It is easily recognized by the large, distinctive black patches around its eyes, over the ears, and across its round body.
- The giant panda is a folivore (an animal that feeds on leaves), with bamboo shoots and leaves making up more than 99% of its diet.
- The giant panda lives in a few mountain ranges in central China, mainly in Sichuan, but also in neighbouring Shaanxi and Gansu.
- The giant panda is a conservation-reliant vulnerable species.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- The Hindu

28.05.2019

1. BIMSTEC leaders invited to PM designate Modi's oath-taking ceremony
 - Recently India has invited several heads of state, including those from the Bay of Bengal community (BIMSTEC) for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's swearing-in ceremony on May 30 on the line of 'Neighbourhood First' policy.

Related Information

Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation

- It is a regional organization came into being in 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration.
- The objective was to harness growth through mutual cooperation in different areas of common interests by mitigating the onslaught of globalization and by utilizing regional resources and geographical advantages.
- The BIMSTEC member states— Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Nepal and Bhutan are among the countries dependent on the Bay of Bengal.
- BIMSTEC Permanent Secretariat is at Dhaka.
- Kathmandu declaration was released during the recent summit.
- It described terrorism as a "great threat" to international peace and security.
- It provides for optimisation of using energy resources in the region and promoting efficient power system

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Governance

Source- The Hindu

2. NGT fines U.P. pollution body for 'misleading' report

- The National Green Tribunal has imposed a penalty on the Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board over a "misleading" report filed by it pertaining to the inspection of two industrial units in Ghaziabad.

Related Information

National Green Tribunal:

- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) is a statutory body that was established in 2010 by the National Green Tribunal Act.

Objective

- To provide a specialized forum for effective and speedy disposal of cases pertaining to environment protection, conservation of forests and for seeking compensation for damages caused to people or property due to

violation of environmental laws or conditions specified while granting permissions.

- The Principal Bench of the NGT has been established in the National Capital – New Delhi, with regional benches in Pune, Bhopal, Chennai and Kolkata.
- The Chairperson of the NGT is a retired Judge of the Supreme Court other judicial members are retired Judges of High Courts.

Legal jurisdiction of NGT:

- The NGT has the power to hear all civil cases relating to environmental issues and questions that are linked to the implementation of laws listed in Schedule I of the NGT Act.

These include the following:

- The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974
- The Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980
- The Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981
- The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986
- The Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991
- The Biological Diversity Act, 2002.
- The NGT has not been vested with powers to hear any matter relating to the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the Indian Forest Act, 1927 and various laws enacted by States relating to forests, tree preservation etc.
- The NGT is not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice.
- India is the third country in the world – after Australia and New Zealand – to set up such a body to deal with environmental cases.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- The Hindu

3. DRDO successfully test fires AKASH – MK -1S
 - Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has successfully tested fired AKASH-MK-1S missile.

Related Information

About Akash MK1S

- Akash Mk1S is an upgrade version of existing AKASH missile with indigenous Seeker.
- AKASH Mk1S is a surface to air missile which can neutralize advanced aerial targets.
- The medium range multi-target engagement capable missile was developed as part of the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP) other than Nag, Agni, Trishul, and Prithvi missiles.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source- PIB

4. Madhya Pradesh's Orchha makes it to the tentative list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites
 - The Archaeological Survey of India had sent a proposal to the UNESCO for the Orchha town of Madhya Pradesh to make it into the tentative list of world heritage sites.

Related Information

About Orchha

- Orchha is located in Niwari district of Madhya Pradesh on the bank of Betwa River.
- It was built by King Rudra Pratap Singh of Bundela dynasty in the 16th century.
- Orchha is also famous for its two elevated minaret called Saavan and Bhadon.
- The town has four palaces — Jahangir Palace, Raj Mahal, Sheesh Mahal and Rai Praveen Mahal.
- The Bundela architecture has Mughal influence since the two dynasties were very close.
- Orchha is also the only place in India where Lord Ram is worshipped as a king with a dedicated temple in his name called Sri Ram Raja Mandir.

About UNESCO World Heritage Sites in India

- UNESCO World Heritage Site is a place that is recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization as of distinctive cultural or physical importance which is considered of outstanding value to humanity.

- UNESCO strives to encourage the conservation, identification, and maintenance of natural and cultural heritage around the world.
- This is exemplified the Convention regarding the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, accepted by UNESCO in 1972.

Topic- GS Paper 1 – Art and Culture

Source- The Hindu

5. India elected to Executive Board of first UN-Habitat Assembly
 - India has been elected to the Executive Board of the first UN-Habitat Assembly.
 - First UN-Habitat Assembly was held at Nairobi, Kenya.
 - The special theme for the UN-Habitat Assembly is "Innovation for Better Quality of Life in Cities and Communities."

Topic- Important for State PCS exams

Source- AIR News

6. Mount Agung volcano
 - Recently Mount Agung Volcano has erupted in the Bali island of Indonesia.

Related Information

About Mount Agung

- It is a currently active volcano in Bali, Indonesia.
- Gunung Agung strato volcano is the highest point on Bali.
- It dominates the surrounding area, influencing the climate, especially rainfall patterns

Note :

- The Barren Island volcano is India's only active volcano in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- TOI

7. Liquidity management gets new guidelines from the RBI
 - Recently, the Reserve Bank of India has proposed a Liquidity Coverage Ratio (LCR) for Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs).
 - The ongoing NBFC crises have forced RBI to bring such new regulations.

Highlights of the Guidelines

- NBFCs, over a period of the next four years, will be required to hold an

amount of high-quality liquid assets (HQLA) that's enough to fund cash outflows for 30 days.

- The LCR requirement will be binding on NBFCs from April 1, 2020, with the minimum HQLAs to be held is 60 per cent of the LCR, progressively increasing in equal steps reaching up to the level of 100 per cent by April 1, 2024.
- During a period of financial stress, NBFCs will have to use their stock of HQLA.

Impact of New regulation

- It will strengthen the framework of NBFC regulations, further ensuring a sound and robust risk management system to manage structural and dynamic liquidity in an efficient manner
- It will help NBFCs to prudently manage their liabilities and the stepwise approach will allow them to gradually catch up to these requirements.

Other steps taken by RBI with regard to NBFC crises

- The Central Board of the RBI had decided to create a specialised cadre to supervise and regulate the financial sector, including banks and NBFCs.
- The RBI recently asked NBFCs with asset size of more than Rs 5,000 crore to appoint chief risk officer with the clearly specified role and responsibilities.

About High-Quality Liquid assets

- It is the assets include only those with a high potential to be converted easily and quickly into cash. Eg. Government securities, gold and others.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Economics

Source- Indian Express

29.05.2019

1. A golden spike: Scientists give the thumbs-up for Anthropocene Epoch
 - Geologic marker or golden spike (technically called Global boundary Stratotype Section and Point) to

signal the beginning of the Anthropocene Epoch.

Characteristic of Golden Spike

- The golden spike must be present globally and should be a part of deposits for geological record.
- The artificial radionuclides spread across the world by atomic bomb tests from the early 1950s would serve as the golden spike.
- The radionuclides are present almost everywhere — from marine sediments to ice layers and even stalagmites and stalactites.

Related Information

About Anthropocene epoch

- The term 'Anthropocene' was coined in 2000 by Nobel Laureate Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer to denote the present geological time interval in which human activity has profoundly altered many conditions and processes on Earth.
- According to the AWG, the phenomena associated with the Anthropocene include an order-of-magnitude increase in erosion and sediment transport associated with urbanisation and agriculture.

Topic- GS Paper 3- Science and Technology

Source- The Hindu

2. CWMA ordered Karnataka to release 9.19 tmcft

- The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) ordered Karnataka to release 9.19 tmcft of water for the month of June from the Biligundlu reservoir to the Mettur dam in Tamil Nadu.

Related Information

About Cauvery Water Management Authority

- The Central Government has constituted the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CMA) after the following directions from Supreme Court in 2018 to address the dispute over sharing of river water among Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala and Puducherry.

Composition of Cauvery Water Management Authority

- The authority will comprise a chairman, a secretary and eight members.
- Out of the eight members, two will be full time, while two will be part-time members from the centre's side.
- Rest four will be part-time members from states.

Topic- GS Paper 2- Governance

Source- The Hindu

3. Ozone pollution likely to spike in Delhi

- According to a forecast by the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR) the surface ozone pollution is expected to increase in Delhi in the next three days.

Related Information

About Surface ozone

- Surface ozone is not a primary pollutant and it is produced due to chemical reactions of NOx (nitrogen oxides), CO (carbon monoxide) in the presence of sunlight.
- When temperature increases, the rate of production of ozone also increases.
- Surface ozone can lead to cough, shortness of breath, throat pain in short term and cause corrosion of linings of lungs and make lungs vulnerable to further infections in case of long-term exposure.

About the System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research

- SAFAR was developed indigenously by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune and operationalized by India Meteorological Department (IMD).
- It is an integral part of India's first Air Quality Early Warning System operational in Delhi under the Ministry of Science.
- It will monitor all weather parameters like temperature, rainfall, humidity, wind speed and wind direction.
- It also will measure sun's UV-Index (UVI), PM1, Mercury and Black carbon in real time in addition to regular air quality and weather parameters like PM2.5, PM10, Sulfur Dioxide, Ozone,

Nitrogen Oxides, and Carbon Monoxide.

Topic- GS Paper 3- Environment
Source- The Hindu

4. Social and Labor Convergence Programme

- Cotton Textiles and Export Promotion Council will launch 'Social and Labor Convergence Programme (SLCP) in India.
- It is an initiative to have a standard-neutral, converged assessment framework for the textile and clothing industry.
- The objective of the initiative is to improve the working conditions in textile units by allowing resources that were previously designated for compliance audits to be redirected towards the improvement of social and labour conditions.

Related Information

About Cotton Textiles and Export Promotion Council

- Texprocil is an autonomous, nonprofit body dedicated to the export promotion of cotton textiles.
- It makes suggestions for strengthening the export efforts and also to provide data for monitoring exports.

Topic- GS Paper 2- Governance
Source- Indian Express

5. Burnout a medical condition says WHO

- The World Health Organization has for the first time recognised "burn-out" in its International Classification of Diseases (ICD), which is widely used as a benchmark for diagnosis and health insurers.
- The term "burnout" was coined in the 1970s by the American psychologist Herbert Freudenberger.
- According to the WHO, "burn-out is a syndrome conceptualized as resulting from chronic workplace stress that has not been successfully managed.
- The WHO has also noted that burn-out refers specifically to phenomena in the occupational context and should not be used in other contexts.

- The burnout has three components:
 - feelings of energy depletion or exhaustion
 - increased mental distance from one's job, or feelings of negativism or cynicism related to one's job
 - reduced professional efficacy

Related Information

About International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health problems

- It is a handbook of recognised medical conditions.
- It defines the universe of diseases, disorders, injuries and other related health conditions.
- The updated ICD list (ICD 11), was drafted in 2018 and was recently approved which will be came into effect from January 2022.

Topic- GS Paper 2- Social Issues
Source- TOI

6. Telangana to have India's first blockchain district

- Telangana had signed an agreement with Tech Mahindra to launch the Blockchain district.
- Tech Mahindra as a founding member of the Blockchain district will provide platform and technology assistance to all the incubators and will also empower accelerators to develop and solve market problems across its global customer ecosystem.
- The World Economic Forum anticipates that 10 per cent of global GDP will be stored on the Blockchain by 2025.

Feature of the Policy

- It proposed 25 per cent subsidy on lease rentals up to 5 lakh per annum for the first 3 years of operations.
- The government will provide office space to house all the Blockchain start-ups, co-working and incubation spaces at highly subsidised prices.
- Land is given at subsidised rates, funding of research and regulatory and policy support.
- The guidelines specified for regular ICT (Information and Communication Technology) companies in terms of

annual revenue, investment promises; employment creation promises would be partially relaxed for Blockchain firms.

Topic- GS Paper 2- Governance
Source-Live Mint

7. 'World's rivers loaded with antibiotics waste'
- According to a research paper, rivers worldwide are polluted with antibiotics that exceed environmental safety thresholds by up to 300 times.
 - The research paper was presented at a recent meeting of environmental toxicologists in Helsinki.
 - According to the paper, at a number of locations, concentrations of the drugs which are used to fight off bacterial infection in people and livestock exceeded safety levels set by the AMR Industry Alliance.
 - The AMR Industry Alliance is one of the largest private sector coalitions set up to provide sustainable solutions to curb antimicrobial resistance.
 - The countries with the highest levels of antibiotic river pollution were Bangladesh, Kenya, Ghana, Pakistan and Nigeria.

Related Information

- Antimicrobial resistance happens when germs like bacteria and fungi develop the ability to defeat the drugs designed to kill them.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) recognises AMR as a serious threat to global public health.

Topic- GS Paper 3- Science and Technology
Source- Down to Earth

8. Seawater from Ice Age tucked in rocks discovered in the Indian Ocean
- Recently scientists from the ship have discovered the remnants of seawater dating back to the Ice Age, tucked inside rock formations in the middle of the Indian Ocean.
 - This discovery was made using the ship called JOIDES Resolution.

Related Information

About Joint Oceanographic Institutions for Deep Earth Sampling (JOIDES) Resolution

- It is one of the scientific drilling ships used by the International Ocean Discovery Program (IODP), an international, multi-drilling platform research program.
- The ship, the JOIDES Resolution, is specifically built for ocean science and is equipped with a drill that can extract cores of rock over a mile long from up to three miles beneath the seafloor is used for the discovery.
- The JOIDES Resolution Science Operator is funded through a cooperative agreement with the US National Science Foundation, with international contributions from 23 Program member countries.

Topic- GS Paper 3- Science and Technology
Source- The Hindu

9. US has removed India from its currency monitoring list.
- The Trump administration removed India from its currency monitoring list of major trading partners.
 - It cited certain developments and steps being taken by New Delhi which address some of its major concerns.
 - Switzerland is the other nation that has been removed by the US from its currency monitoring list.
 - India for the first time was placed by the US in its currency monitoring list of countries with potentially questionable foreign exchange policies in May 2018 along with five other countries - China, Germany, Japan, South Korea and Switzerland.

Topic- GS Paper 3- Economics
Source- AIR

30.05.2019

1. National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission
- After a seven-year fight, two Haryana farmers have been granted compensation of almost 5 lakh from cooperative giant IndiaFarmers

Fertiliser Cooperative Limited which sold them defective guar seeds that led to 70% crop failure.

- The farmers won their case at the National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission (NCDRC).

Related Information

National Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission

- It is a quasi-judicial commission in India which was set up in 1988 under the Consumer Protection Act, 1986.
- It's head office is in New Delhi.
- The commission is headed by a sitting or retired judge of the Supreme Court of India.
- The person aggrieved by an order of NCDRC may prefer an Appeal against such order to Supreme Court of India within a period of 30 days.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important Institutions

Source- The Hindu

2. Armed Forces Tribunal

- Recently the Armed Forces Tribunal hear dispute over Navy chief in July.

Related Information

Armed Forces Tribunal

- Armed Forces Tribunal has been set up under the Armed Forces Tribunal Act, 2007.
- It helps to provide for the adjudication or trial of disputes and complaints with respect to commission, appointments, enrolment and conditions of service in respect of persons subject to the Army Act, 1950, the Navy Act, 1957 and the Air Force Act, 1950.
- It also helps to provide for appeals arising out of orders, findings or sentences of courts-martial held under the said Acts and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.
- Armed Forces Tribunal has its Principal Bench at New Delhi.
- It's eight Regional Benches at Jaipur, Chandigarh, Lucknow, Guwahati, Kolkata, Chennai, Kochi and Mumbai.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source- The Hindu

3. US-UAE defence agreement comes into force

- The US and the UAE have announced that mutual defence cooperation agreement (DCA) has come into force, amid increasing tensions between Washington and Tehran.
- DCA will enhance military coordination between the United States and the United Arab Emirates.
- This came on the eve of emergency Arab and Gulf summits called by Saudi Arabia to discuss the stand-off and ways to isolate Tehran.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – International Relations

Source- AIR

4. India elected to Executive Board of first UN-Habitat Assembly

- India has been elected to the Executive Board of the first UN-Habitat Assembly at the Plenary Session of the Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya.
- The special theme for the UN-Habitat Assembly is "Innovation for Better Quality of Life in Cities and Communities

Related Information

- The United Nations Human Settlements Programme is the United Nations agency for human settlements and sustainable urban development.
- It was established in 1978.
- It is headquartered at Nairobi, Kenya.
- The twin goals of the Habitat Agenda are
 - adequate shelter for all
 - development of sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world.
- It reports directly to the UN General Assembly.
- It is also a member of the United Nations Development Group.

Topic-GS Paper 3–International Institution

Source- PIB

5. Operation Safed Sagar

- Recently the Chief of the Air Staff visits Bhisiana and Sarsawa to pay homage to the air warriors who made

supreme sacrifice during 'Operation Safed Sagar' in Kargil.

- On 28 May 1999, four IAF personnel had laid down their lives while flying a mission during Operation Safed Sagar.

Related Information

About Operation Sagar

- It was the code name assigned to the Indian Air Force's role in acting jointly with Ground troops during the Kargil war.
- The operation was aimed at flushing out Regular and Irregular troops of the Pakistani Army from vacated Indian Positions in the Kargil sector along the Line of Control.
- It was the first large scale use of airpower in the Jammu and Kashmir region since the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971.
- The missing man formation is an aerial salute accorded to honour the fallen comrades-in-arms.
- It is an arrow formation with a gap between two aircraft in the formation depicting the missing man.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Defence

Source-PI B

6. Sri Lanka, Japan, India sign deal to develop East Container Terminal at Colombo Port
 - Sri Lanka, Japan and India signed an agreement to jointly develop the East Container Terminal at the Colombo Port.
 - It would be beneficial for India as around 70% of Colombo Port shipment is related to India.
 - Its aims to neutralising the growing influence of China which has poured money into Sri Lanka under its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) infrastructure plan.

Related Information

Belt and Road Initiative

- The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a global development strategy adopted by the Chinese government involving infrastructure development and investments.
- The programme helps to connect Asia with Africa and Europe via land and

maritime networks along six corridors.

It aims at improving

- trade
- regional integration
- stimulating economic growth

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Infrastructure

Source- Indian Express

7. Study throws new light on the evolution of northern Indian Ocean

- An international team of scientists has unearthed ancient rock samples around 70 million years ago from the seabed near Laxmi Basin located on the western margin of the Indian continental plate.
- The Laxmi Basin is a 300-kilometre-wide, marginal depression enclosed by the Indian continental shelf and the Laxmi Ridge on either side.

Theories behind the development of Basin

1. The basin is believed to be formed by the extension of the Indian continental tectonic plate
 2. While another theory held that the surface of the basin composed of an oceanic crust overlying an extinct spreading center formed due to drifting of two tectonic plates.
- The finding provides a glimpse of convergent plate motion in the area which is otherwise dominated by divergent tectonics that had led to the breakup of super continent Gondwanaland into three parts: Madagascar, Seychelles, and India.
 - The finding will help to determine precisely how the Indian plate moved away from Madagascar and Seychelles just prior to the Deccan volcanism.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- Down to Earth

8. National Clean Air Programme

- Recently 84 out of the 102 cities that have been submitted its own action plan to tasked with reducing toxic particulate matter levels by 20%-30% by 2024.
- Under the National Clean Air Program 102 cities, considered India's most

polluted, have been tasked with reducing PM (particulate matter) 10 and PM 2.5 levels by 2024.

Related Information

About National Clean Air Programme

- The National Clean Air Programme was launched in Jan 2019 to tackle the challenge of increasing pollution in the cities and towns.

Features of the Programme

- It is a five-year action plan with a tentative target of 20-30% reduction in concentrations of PM10 and PM2.5 by 2024, with 2017 as the base year.
- The plan covers 102 non-attainment cities, across 23 states and Union territories, which were identified by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) on the basis of their ambient air quality data between 2011 and 2015.
- Non-attainment cities are those cities which show consistently showing poorer air quality than the National Ambient Air Quality Standards.
- The Apex committee in the Ministry of Environment would periodically review the progress of these components on the basis of appropriate indicators, which will be evolved.
- Each city would be asked to develop its own action plan for implementation based on sources of pollution.
- The plan is not legally binding.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment

Source- The Hindu

31.05.2019

1. New species of wasp identified in Goa
 - A new species of wasp from the genus Kudakrumia has been recently identified by scientists in Goa in Cotigao Wildlife Sanctuary.
 - The wasp, Kudakrumia Rangnekari, was named after Goa-based researcher Parag Rangnekar.

- Kudakrumia is a genus of primitive wasps, described and previously known only from Sri Lanka.
- A wasp is any insect of the order Hymenoptera and suborder Apocrita that is neither a bee nor an ant.
- Wasps are adept at controlling pest populations and are regularly deployed to protect crops.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Environment and Biodiversity

Source- The Hindu

2. Puerto Williams is the world's southernmost city

- Recently Puerto Williams a southern tip city of South American Continent selected as the world's Southernmost City instead of Ushuaia, Argentina which was earlier the world's southernmost city.

Related Information

About Puerto Williams

- Puerto Williams is the main settlement, port and naval base on Navarino Island in Chile.
- It faces the Beagle Channel.
- It is capital of the Chilean Antarctic Province,

Topic- Important places in the news; Important for State PCS exams

Source- The Hindu

3. India has 20 health workers per 10,000 people, study finds

- A study based on the National Sample Survey Organisation reveals that India has 20.6 health workers per 10,000 people which is less than the WHO minimum threshold of 22.8 per thousand's

Highlights of the report

- The distribution of health workers is uneven between urban and rural areas.
- Rural areas with nearly 71% of India's population have only 36% of health workers.
- Delhi has the highest concentration of health workers followed by Kerala, Punjab, and Haryana.
- The study has further noted that there is an uneven distribution of health

workers in private and public health sector with more than 80% of doctors and 70% of nurses and midwives being employed in the private sector.

- Recently, a WHO database has put India into the “critical shortage of healthcare providers” category.
- India has a low density of health professionals with the number being lower than those of Sri Lanka, China, Thailand, United Kingdom and Brazil.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – Important Reports

Source- Indian Express

4. India moves up to 43rd in 2019th edition of World Competitiveness Index
- India has moved up one place to rank 43rd most competitive economy in the world in the International Institute for Management and Development (IMD) World Competitiveness Rankings.

Highlights of Index

- Singapore, Hong Kong and the US are placed on top of the list.
- The United Arab Emirates - ranked 15th as recently as 2016 - entered the top five for the first time.
- India's ranking has improved by one place in past one year to 43rd, driven by a robust rate of growth in real GDP, improvements in business legislation and an increase in public expenditure on education.

Challenge before India:

- The IMD study said the challenges before India remain
 - maintaining high growth with employment generation,
 - digital literacy and internet bandwidth in rural areas, managing fiscal discipline,
 - as also issues related to the implementation of Goods and Services Tax and
 - resource mobilisation for infrastructure development.

Related Information

About IMD World Competitiveness Ranking

- The IMD World Competitiveness Rankings, established in 1989 in Switzerland.
- It incorporates 235 indicators from each of the 63 ranked economies to

evaluate their ability to foster an environment where enterprises can achieve sustainable growth, generate jobs and increase welfare for its citizens.

- It takes into account a wide range of statistics such as unemployment, GDP and government spending on health and education, as well as data from an executive opinion survey covering topics such as social cohesion, globalisation and corruption.

Topic- GS Paper 3 – Important Index

Source- Economics Times

5. National Company Law Appellate Tribunal
- The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) allowed the Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS) companies declare ‘amber’ companies as ‘green’ companies.
- The new board at IL&FS had classified IL&FS group companies into three categories, namely ‘green’, ‘amber’, and ‘red’ based on their financial health and ability to service debt obligations to secured and unsecured creditors.
- Companies with no cash and not in a position to pay any creditor were classified as red
- Those with enough to pay secured creditors but not unsecured ones were put under the amber category.
- The firms which have enough money to service all their debts, to the secured as well as unsecured creditors, were classified as green.

Related Information

About National Company Law Appellate Tribunal

- National Company Law Appellate Tribunal was constituted under Section 410 of the Companies Act, 2013 for hearing appeals against the orders of National Company Law Tribunal(s) (NCLT), with effect from 1st June 2016.
- NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by NCLT(s) under Section 61 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016.

- NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal for hearing appeals against the orders passed by Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India under Section 202 and Section 211 of IBC.
- NCLAT is also the Appellate Tribunal to hear and dispose of appeals against any direction issued or decision made or order passed by the Competition Commission of India.

Topic- GS Paper 3–Important Institution
 Source- The Hindu

6. WHO has dropped 'being transgender' from the list of mental disorders
 - The World Health Organization (WHO) will no longer categorise being transgender as a "mental disorder".
 - According to the newly-revised version of the International Classification of Diseases (known as ICD-11), "gender identity disorders" have been reframed as "gender incongruence."
 - Gender incongruence is defined as a marked and persistent incongruence between a person's experienced gender and assigned sex.
 - Gender incongruence has now been listed under sexual health conditions as opposed to "mental disorders".
 - According to Human Rights Watch, the WHO's removal of 'gender identity disorder' from ICD will have a liberating effect on transgender people worldwide.

Related Information

About International Statistical Classification of Diseases

- It is a handbook of recognised medical conditions.
- It defines the universe of diseases, disorders, injuries and other related health conditions.
- The updated ICD list (ICD 11), was drafted in 2018 and was recently

approved which will be take into effect from January 2022.

Topic- GS Paper 2 – International Organisation

Source- Indian Express

7. Cyclones in West Pacific delaying monsoon over mainland India

- According to Climate Prediction Centre (CPC) of the US National Weather Service, the onset of the monsoon over Kerala is being delayed mainly by an ongoing suppressed phase of the Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO) wave.

Related Information

About Madden-Julian Oscillation

- MJO is an eastward moving disturbance of clouds, rainfall, winds, and pressure that traverses the planet in the tropics and returns to its initial starting point in 30 to 60 days, on average.
- This atmospheric disturbance is distinct from El Niño-Southern Oscillation, which once established, is associated with persistent features that last several seasons or longer over the Pacific Ocean basin.
- The MJO consists of two phases
 - one is the enhanced rainfall (or convective) phase
 - Second is the suppressed rainfall phase.
- The MJO can produce impacts similar to those of ENSO, but which appear only in weekly averages before changing, rather than persisting and therefore appearing in seasonal averages as is the case for ENSO.
- The band of lower pressure in the MJO wave sets up storms/depressions and underwrites monsoon onsets as it travels east.

Topic-GS Paper 3–Disaster Management

Source- The Hindu



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