



**INTERNATIONAL
YOGA DAY**

JUNE 21



**ESE - PRELIMS
CURRENT ISSUES**

(June 2018 - July 2018)



ACE

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ESE

(Prelims)

Current Issues

(June and July 2018)

On

Economic & Industrial Development

Issues on Social Development

International Issues

Environment

Science & Technology

Miscellaneous

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7 All India 1st Ranks in ESE
43 All India 1st Ranks in GATE

Foreword

Current Issues for ESE



Dear Students,

This book is intended to help students, prepare current affairs on a monthly basis. The topics covered give a comprehensive understanding on issues related to Socio, Economic, Industrial Development, Energy and Environment and ICT based tools.

Apart from technical knowledge, current affairs help an aspirant to understand issues in a multi-dimensional approach and contributes to a holistic personality development. The coverage of news and events given are the most pertinent for ESE Revised pattern.

The key to master current affairs is a 'piece-meal preparation' over a period of time and this material is an endeavor to help students prepare in a systematic manner.

This issue covers Current Affairs from June and July 2018 and subsequent issues will be given on a bi-monthly basis.

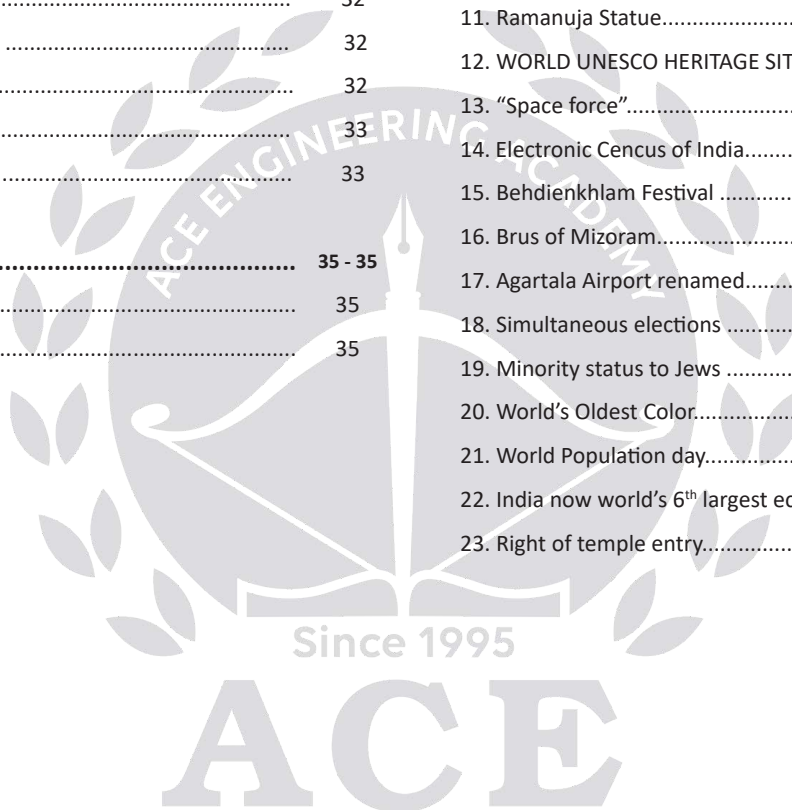
With best wishes to all the Students

Y.V. Gopala Krishna Murthy,
M Tech. MIE,
Chairman & Managing Director,
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ACE Engineering Publications.

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BANKING

1. Bad Bank

- Finance minister Piyush Goyal recently announced that a bankers' panel would look at the feasibility of setting up a new Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC) or Asset Management Company (AMC) to take over bad loans of PSBs.
- The panel is headed by Punjab National Bank non-executive chairman Sunil Mehta.
- The concept of having a 'bad bank' to take over the troubled loans of public sector banks (PSBs) is being considered by the government to enable them to get back to business.
- While the government has not charted out any guidelines on the structure of a bad bank, such an institution would be largely based on the principles of an asset restructuring company (ARC), which buys bad loans from the commercial banks at a discount and tries to recover the money from the defaulter by providing a systematic solution over a period of time. Since a bad bank specialises in loan recovery, it is expected to perform better than commercial banks, whose expertise lies in lending.

2. RBI re-defines 'Relative'

- Concerned over funds sent abroad under the 'maintenance of close relative' category of the Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS), the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has narrowed the definition of relatives to check the flow of funds.
- RBI has aligned the definition of 'relative' with the definition given in Companies Act, 2013 instead of Companies Act, 1956.
- Hence, funds under the 'maintenance of close relative' category can be sent only to immediate relatives such as parents, spouses, children and their spouses.

3. State Banks (Repeal and Amendment) Bill, 2017

- Parliament passes State Banks (Repeal and Amendment) Bill, 2017 to merge six subsidiary banks with State Bank of India after it was approved by Rajya Sabha.

Features of the Bill:

- The bill repeals two Acts namely- State Bank of India (Subsidiary Banks) Act, 1959, and State Bank of Hyderabad Act, 1956. These two acts had established State Bank of Bikaner, State Bank of Patiala, State Bank of Mysore, State Bank of Hyderabad and State Bank of Travancore. These banks were subsidiaries of SBI.



- By repealing these two acts, five subsidiary banks will be merged with SBI. The bill also seeks to amend State Bank of India (SBI) Act, 1955 to remove references to subsidiary banks and powers of SBI to act as an agent of the RBI for subsidiary banks.

The Union Cabinet in February 2017 had approved merger of five associate banks along with Bharatiya Mahila Bank with SBI. The purposes of merger were rationalisation of public bank resources, reduction of costs, better profitability, and lower cost of funds leading to better rate of interest for public at large and improve productivity and customer service of the public service banks. The merger had made SBI one of 50 biggest banks of world.

FINANCIAL MARKETS

4. Financial Literacy Week

- RBI is observing Financial Literacy Week in the month of June.
- *Objective:* To emphasize the importance of financial literacy.
- *Theme:* Consumer protection.
- *Importance:* It will focus on creating awareness among customers of banks about financial products and services, good financial practices and going digital.

5. Credit enhancement fund

The government is likely to launch a Rs 500-crore credit enhancement fund next month to facilitate infrastructure investments by insurance and pension funds.

Credit Surety Fund

Credit enhancement scheme that aims to improve the bankability and credit worthiness of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), including cooperatives and NGOs, which are experiencing difficulty in obtaining loans from banks due to lack of acceptable collaterals, credit knowledge and credit track records.

It takes the place of acceptable collaterals required by banks to secure the loan.

- The fund was first announced in the financial budget for fiscal year 2016-17.
- It will help in upgrading credit ratings of bonds issued by infrastructure companies and facilitate investment from investors like pension and insurance funds.
- The initial corpus of the fund, to be sponsored by IIFCL (India Infrastructure Finance Company), will be Rs 500 crore, and it will operate as a non-banking finance company.
- IIFCL will hold a 22.5% stake in the NBFC, while the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) has offered to pick up a 10% stake. State-run SBI, Bank of Baroda and LIC will also have stakes in the firm.



6. Currency Derivatives

- The Multi Commodity Exchange of India (MCX), the country's largest commodity in terms of market share, is planning to enter the currency derivatives segment.

Currency derivatives are exchange-based futures and options contracts that allow one to hedge against currency movements.

- Simply put, one can use a currency future contract to exchange one currency for another at a future date at a price decided on the day of the purchase of the contract.
- In India, one can use such derivative contracts to hedge against currencies like dollar, euro, U.K. pound and yen. Corporates, especially those with a significant exposure to imports or exports, use these contracts to hedge against their exposure to a certain currency.
- While all such currency contracts are cash-settled in rupees, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), early this year, gave a go-ahead to start cross currency contracts as well on euro-dollar, pound-dollar and dollar-yen.

7. Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP)

- Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) of sugarcane.
- FRP is the minimum price that the sugar mills have to pay to farmers.

- It is supposed to signal to farmers the need to plant more or less cane for the coming year.
- CACP recommends the fair and remunerative prices based on inter-crop price parity, inflation considerations, fair return to farmers and a host of other factors. It is the cabinet Committee on Economic affairs that finally approves it.

TAXATION

8. Seva Bhoj Yojna

- SevaBhojYojna is a new scheme recently introduced by the Union Ministry of Culture to reimburse the central share of CGST and IGST on items for food/ prasad/ langar/ bhandara offered free of cost by charitable religious institutions.
- The scheme seeks to reimburse the central government's share of Central Goods and Services Tax (CGST) and Integrated Goods and Service Tax (IGST) on purchase of raw items such as ghee, edible oil, atta, maida, rava, flour, rice pulses, sugar and jaggery, which go into preparation of food/ prasad/ langar/bhandara offered free of cost by religious institutions.

Seva Bhoj Yojana GST reimbursement for religious & Charitable trusts

Government to reimburse GST & center IGST on raw material for food & prasad

Eligibility: Religious & Charitable Trusts
Benefits: GST & Center IGST reimbursement



- *Objective:* to lessen the financial burden of such charitable religious institutions, which provide free of cost without any discrimination to the general public and devotees.

AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY

9. Khadi & Village Industries Commission (KVIC)

- KVIC has created a world record of distributing maximum number of bee-boxes in one day.
- The record was achieved by the KVIC in the Zangalee Army area at Kupwara in Kashmir beating its previous best of 1000 bee boxes distributed in Kaziranga forest area among the Mishong tribe on the occasion of World Honey Bee Day.
- Two thousand three hundred thirty (2330) bee-boxes were distributed among 233 beneficiaries in the Zangalee Army area.
- The Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC) is a statutory body established by an Act of Parliament (Khadi and Village Industries Commission Act of 1956). In April 1957, it took over the work of former All India Khadi and Village Industries Board.
- It is an apex organization under the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, with regard to khadi and village industries within India, which seeks to “plan, promote, facilitate, organise and assist in the establishment and development of khadi and

village industries in the rural areas in coordination with other agencies engaged in rural development wherever necessary.”

The Commission has three main objectives which guide its functioning.

The Social Objective – Providing employment in rural areas.

The Economic Objective – Providing saleable articles.

The Wider Objective – Creating self-reliance amongst people and building up a strong rural community spirit.

10. Suryashakti Kisan Yojana (SKY) scheme

- In an attempt to promote solar energy, the Gujarat government has announced Suryashakti Kisan Yojana (SKY) scheme under which farmers would be encouraged to generate electricity and sell their surplus to power distribution companies.

Detailst:

- Under the first phase of project, the state government would provide financial assistance to 12,400 farmers out of the state’s total 15 lakh farmers to generate an estimated 175 MW of power.
- The state government and the Centre would jointly share 60% of the cost of installing a solar generating unit in the fields, while the farmers would need to chip in only 5%. The remaining 35% would be in the form of a loan by the state government at the rate of 4 to 4.5%.



- The government would also enter in a 25-year power purchase agreement with the farmers. Till the farmers repay their loan, the distribution companies would buy electricity from them at the rate of Rs 7 per unit and at Rs 3.5 per unit once the loans are settled. After that, the farmers would get ownership of the solar system.
- At present, the farmers consume power purchased from power companies. The project will help them set up solar systems in their fields. After they consumer power according to their requirement, they can sell the surplus back to the distribution companies.

11. Ease of Doing Business Ranking of States

- Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce and Industry, has released the final rankings of States in Ease of Doing Business.

Performance of states:

- The top rankers are Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Haryana. Jharkhand and Gujarat stood fourth and fifth respectively.
- Delhi is placed at 23rd among 34 states and Union territories. Its rank also worsened from 18th in 2016.
- Karnataka has occupied the eighth spot, against 13th in 2016.

INFRASTRUCTURE

12. Rail Madad

- It is a recently launched App by Indian Railways.
- *Objective:* Aims to expedite & streamline passenger grievance redressal.
- It is a part of RPGRAMS (Railway Passenger Grievance Redressal and Management System), which has been developed by Northern Railway (Delhi Division).
- Rail MADAD (Mobile Application for Desired Assistance During travel) registers a complaint with minimum inputs from passenger (option of photo also available), issues unique ID instantly and relays the complaint online to relevant field officials for immediate action.
- The action taken on complaint is also relayed to passenger through SMS, thus fast tracking the entire process of redressal of complaints through digitisation.
- Rail MADAD also displays various helpline numbers (e.g., Security, Child helpline etc) and provides direct calling facility for immediate assistance in one easy step.

13. Dam Safety Bill, 2018

- The Union Cabinet has approved the proposal for introduction of Dam Safety Bill, 2018 in the Parliament.
- The Bill provides for proper surveillance, inspection, operation and maintenance of all specified dams in the country to ensure their safe functioning.



- The Bill provides for constitution of a National Committee on Dam Safety which shall evolve dam safety policies and recommend necessary regulations as may be required for the purpose.

Key Points:

- Constitution of National Committee on Dam Safety to evolve dam safety policies.
 - Establishment of National Dam Safety Authority to implement the policy and guidelines.
 - Mandatory surveillance, operation and maintenance of all specified dams to ensure safe functioning.
 - Constitution of state committee on dam safety by representative states.
 - The Bill provides for establishment of National Dam Safety Authority as a regulatory body which shall discharge functions to implement the policy, guidelines and standards for dam safety in the country.
 - The Bill provides for constitution of a State Committee on Dam Safety by State Government.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi also recently inaugurated India's first integrated greenfield smart city project at Naya Raipur.
 - Naya Raipur is the first integrated city in India and aims to develop four pillars of Smart city across, institutional (including Governance/Legal Framework), physical, social and economic infrastructure.
 - Under the ambitious Smart City Mission, Integrated Command & Control Centres in 9 cities had already become operational in the cities of are Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, Pune, Nagpur, Rajkot, Visakhapatnam, Bhopal and Kakinada.
 - NayaRaipur is one of the 3 Smart Cities of Chhattisgarh selected under the Smart Cities Mission. The other two cities are Raipur and Bilaspur.

15. 'Cop Connect'

- It is a mobile application developed by Telangana police for their internal communication purpose. It has been developed on the lines of WhatsApp.
- Police have developed this app keeping in view the safety of their information besides having hassle free communication.
- The app is a secure communication channel, with no limit on the number of members in any individual group (unlike the regular WhatsApp which has a restriction of 256 numbers) and has all the features of WhatsApp.

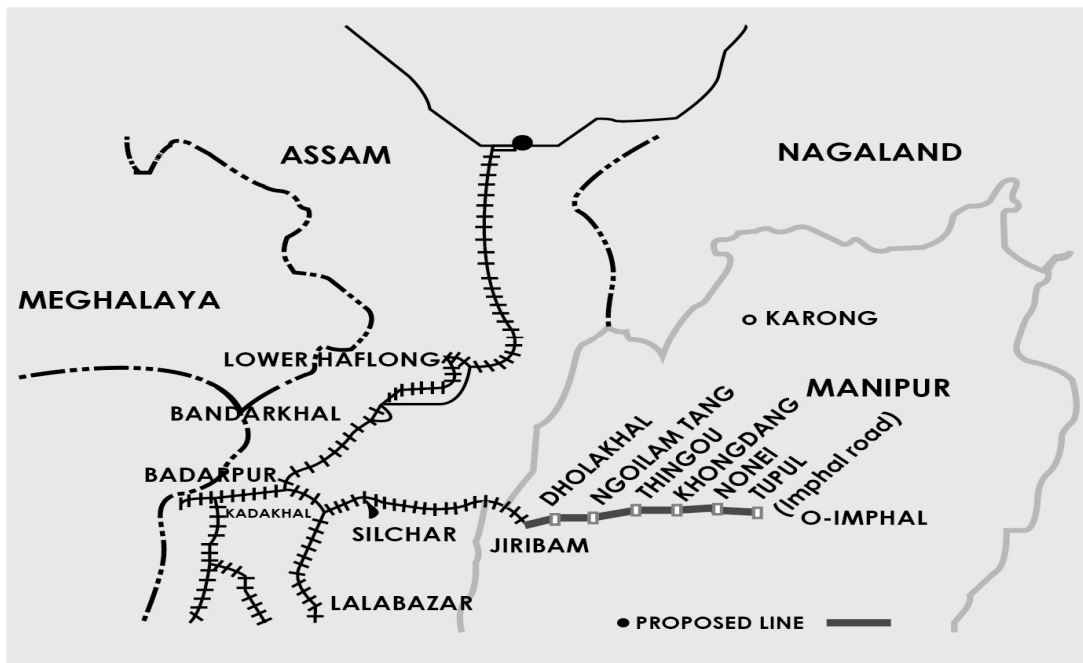
14. Smart cities mission

- Naya Raipur is now the 10th Smart City to be operational in the country, along with 9 other cities including Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, Pune, Nagpur, Rajkot, Visakhapatnam, Bhopal and Kakinada.

- Other features of the Cop-Connect app are chatting, group chats, file sharing (image, audio, video and documents) and location sharing. A unique feature, iMeeting, can help in creating and scheduling department meetings in an easy way.

16. World's tallest girder railway bridge

- World's tallest girder railway bridge is being built in the North East as part of the upcoming 111-kilometres long Jiribam-Tupul-Imphal railway line.
- Bridge No.164 is being built across the valley of river Ijai near Noney and has been designed to take a maximum train speed of 120 kmph.

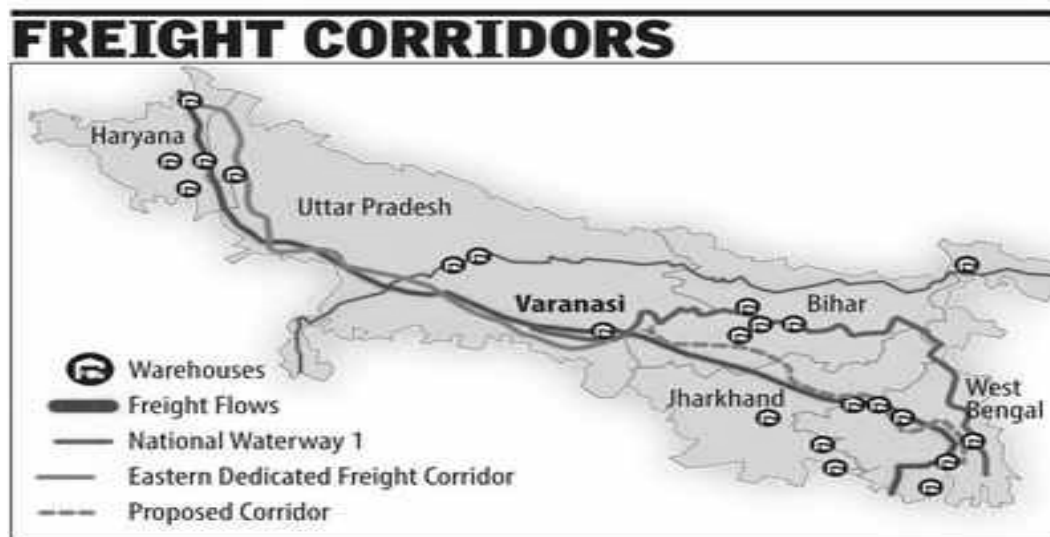


- The Jiribam-Tupul-Imphal railway line cuts across the lower Himalayan range necessitating series of tunnels through the hills and tall bridges across the deep valleys. The line will connect Manipur's state capital Imphal to Jiribam which is on the western-most boundary of the state. Jiribam is an area that adjoins the Cachar district of Assam. As of now Manipur's capital Imphal has no railway connectivity.

- It is located in Seismic Zone-V, making it highly vulnerable to earthquakes.

17. Freight Village in Varanasi

- The Inland Waterways Authority of India proposes to develop a "freight village" in Varanasi.
- The objective of the project is to support economic development in the hinterland of the multimodal terminal at Varanasi and reduce logistics cost in the Eastern Transport Corridor and its influence zone.



- It envisages establishment of multimodal logistics hub in Varanasi to promote the use of waterway transport on river Ganga (NW-1) between Haldia and Varanasi and of rail transport on Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) in the North bound direction which facilitates movement of freight from road to water and rail.

"A freight village is a defined area within which all activities relating to transport, logistics and the distribution of goods, both for national and international transit, are carried out by various operators"

ENERGY

18. Methanol Economy

- The NITI Aayog is working on a roadmap for full-scale implementation of methanol economy in the country in near future.

- Methanol economy would not only curb pollution, but reduce India's dependence on oil imports as well.
- India imports methanol from Saudi Arabia and Iran at present.
- Methanol can be used as an energy producing fuel, transportation fuel and cooking fuel, cutting down India's oil import bill by an estimated 20% over the next few years. Unlike CNG (Compressed Natural Gas), using methanol as a transportation fuel would require minimal alteration in the vehicles.
- Methanol is a promising fuel as it is clean, cheaper than fossil fuels and a good substitute for heavy fuels. Across the world, methanol is emerging as a clean, sustainable transportation fuel of the future.
- Methanol is most commonly produced on a commercial scale from natural gas. It can also be produced from renewable sources such as biomass and recycled carbon dioxide.



- As a high-octane vehicle fuel, methanol offers excellent acceleration and power. It also improves vehicle efficiency.

19. Artificial leaf producing biofuel

- IISc scholars have developed an artificial leaf that'll help reduce carbon footprint and create biofuel.
- The researchers used copper aluminium sulphate and zinc sulphide. The two materials, which are otherwise wide band gap semiconductors, became low band gap semiconductors when combined. Simply put, the lower the band gap, the better conductivity a substance will have.
- The semiconductor they made by combining copper aluminium sulphate and zinc sulphide fulfilled the requirements to convert sunlight into energy, which is how they decided to try and replicate photosynthesis.
- In the process, they also found that this quantum leaf had a much better rate of energy conversation compared to natural leaves – 20% as compared to 0.4-0.5% in photosynthesis.
- The team then harnessed this capacity to produce a sulphate format bio fuel which not only allows for 100% combustion but whose carbon dioxide emissions can be recycled by the quantum leaves.

Potential applications:

- Given that the world is searching for environment friendly and renewable alternatives to fossil fuels, the technology has huge potential. It will also help in reducing the carbon footprint.

20. Off-shore wind power

Government has declared national targets for off-shore wind power to give confidence to wind industry

The targets:

- Medium target of 5 GW by 2022.
- Long term target of 30 GW by 2030.
- Offshore wind power would add a new element to the already existing basket of renewable energy for the country.
- The offshore wind farming is attractive because of several reasons such as stronger winds for efficient generation of power; no impact on real estate value of land as in case of onshore wind farming; its ability to fulfill the demand of the heavily populated coastal regions and no significant environment costs.

National Off-Shore Wind Policy:

The Ministry of New & Renewable Energy had notified National Off-Shore Wind Policy in October 2015 to realize the offshore wind power potential in the country.

With this, the Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) has been authorized as the Nodal Ministry for use of offshore areas



within the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the country and the National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE) has been authorized as the Nodal Agency for development of offshore wind energy.

- Government has paved way for development of the offshore wind farms up to the seaward distance of 200 Nautical Miles (within its Exclusive Economic Zone) from the base line.

21. Pariwartan scheme

- The Rural Electrification Corporation (REC) has finalised a plan to revitalise stressed power sector assets in a joint venture with the Power Finance Corp (PFC) and lenders. The plan is named Pariwartan and stands for power asset warehousing and revitalisation.
- The 'Pariwartan' scheme is inspired by the Troubled Asset Relief Programme, or TARP, which was introduced in the US during the 2008 financial crisis.
- The government plans to warehouse stressed power projects totaling 25,000 MW under an asset management firm to protect the value of the assets.
- This will prevent their distress sale under the insolvency and bankruptcy code until the demand for power picks up.
- State-run Rural Electrification Corp. Ltd (REC) has identified projects with a total debt of around Rs 1.8 trillion as part of the scheme, which is under government consideration.

- These stressed power projects will be housed under an asset management and rehabilitation company (AMRC) that will be owned by financial institutions.
- While the promoter's equity will be reduced to facilitate a transfer of management control to the financial institutions, the lenders will convert their debt into equity.
- The AMRC will manage the projects and may ask utilities such as NTPC Ltd to operate and maintain them. The AMRC will charge a fee and help complete projects that are stranded for lack of funds.

22. Solar Charkha Mission

- President Ram Nath Kovind recently launched the Solar Charkha Mission covering artisans in 50 identified clusters.
- The Solar Charkha Mission will generate employment in rural areas and contribute to the green economy. The mission will entail a subsidy of Rs 550 crore in the initial two years for 50 clusters and every cluster will employ 400 to 2000 artisans.
- The scheme also aims at linking five crore women across the country to the initiative. The mission is expected to create one lakh jobs during the first two years.



23. First BS-VI engine certificate

- ICAT has completed the first BS-VI certification for a heavy-duty engine model for M/s Volvo Eicher Commercial Vehicle Limited.

The BS-or Bharat Stage-emission standards are norms instituted by the government to regulate the output of air pollutants from internal combustion engine equipment, including motor vehicles. India has been following the European (Euro) emission norms, though with a time-lag of five years.

- The major difference in standards between the existing BS-IV and the new BS-VI auto fuel norms is the presence of sulphur. The newly introduced fuel is estimated to reduce the amount of sulphur released by 80%, from 50 parts per million to 10 ppm. As per the analysts, the emission of NO_x (nitrogen oxides) from diesel cars is also expected to reduce by nearly 70% and 25% from cars with petrol engines.
- The International Centre for Automotive Technology (ICAT) is a division of NATRiP (National Automotive Testing and R & D Infrastructure Project) implementation society (NATIS), under the administrative control of the Ministry of Heavy Industries & Public Enterprises, Government of India.

INDICES

24. Global Peace Index 2018

Australia-based Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) has released the 12th edition of the Global Peace Index (GPI), or measure of global peacefulness.

India's ranking:

India has moved up four places to the 137th rank among 163 countries. The improvement is due to a reduction in the level of violent crime driven by increased law enforcement. India was ranked 141 last year.

India was also among the countries with the biggest decreases in the number of deaths, along with Sri Lanka, Chad, Colombia, and Uganda.

Global rankings:

- 1) Iceland
- 2) New Zealand
- 3) Austria
- 4) Portugal
- 5) Denmark

Syria remains the least peaceful country in the world, a position it has held for the past five years. Afghanistan, South Sudan, Iraq and Somalia comprise the remaining least peaceful countries.

25. Global Innovation Index

- Global Innovation Index 2018 has placed India at the 57th position among 130 countries. GII is jointly released by Cornell University, INSEAD and World Intellectual

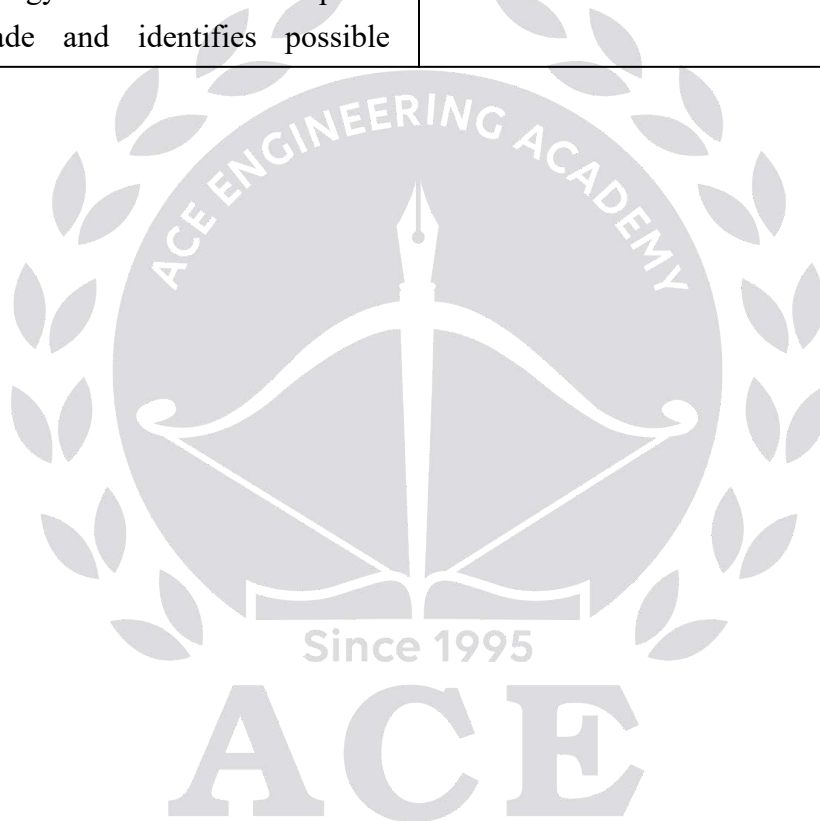


Property Organisation (WIPO). GII ranks 126 economies based on 80 indicators.

- The GII 2018 marks the 11th edition of the GII, and the beginning of its second decade providing data and insights gathered from tracking innovation across the globe.
- This year's edition is dedicated to the theme of *Energizing the World with Innovation*. It analyses the energy innovation landscape of the next decade and identifies possible

breakthroughs in fields such as energy production, storage, distribution, and consumption.

- Switzerland is at the top. Since 2011, Switzerland has been ranked at the top every year.
- This year, Netherlands follows at second place and Sweden at third. The US drops down to sixth from fourth last year.



EDUCATION**1. Universities Ranking**

- Global higher education analysts QS Quacquarelli Symonds have released the 15th edition of the QS World University Rankings. QS Ranks the world's top 1,000 universities, across 85 countries.
- Being the only international ranking to have received International Ranking Expert Group (IREG) approval, the QS ranking is viewed as one of the three most-widely read university rankings in the world, along with Academic Ranking of World Universities and Times Higher Education World University Rankings.

Global rankings:

- 1) Massachusetts Institute of Technology
- 2) Stanford University
- 3) Harvard University
- 4) California Institute of Technology (Caltech)

From Asia, National University of Singapore (11), Nanyang Technological University, Singapore (12) and Tsinghua University, China (17) have been ranked the best.

Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay (IIT-B), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bangalore, and Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (IIT-D) are in the top 200.

2. Kashmir Super 50

- A group of 30 students, part of Kashmir Super 50 recently visited New Delhi and interacted with General Bipin Rawat, Chief of the Army Staff.
- Project Kashmir Super 50 is a joint initiative by Indian Army, Center for Social Responsibility and Leadership (CSRL) and PETRONET LNG Limited (PLL).
- It was launched on 22 March 2013 to transform the educational status of children from economically weaker sections in the Kashmir region.
- As part of the 11-month program, selected students are provided with complete free residential coaching for IIT-JEE, JKCET and other premier Engineering Institutes.

Importance:

Kashmir Super 50 has been one of the most successful projects undertaken by the Indian Army in the valley and has directly impacted the lives of number of youths in J&K by providing them the right guidance and opportunity to make a career for themselves. The project has equally helped the families of these youths in their growth and prosperity. It is a major initiative towards bringing normalcy in the valley.

3. 'Happiness curriculum'

- The Delhi government has launched a "happiness curriculum" in state-run schools.
- The curriculum will be taught to around eight lakh students from nursery up to Class 8 of all Delhi government schools from the new academic session.
- The curriculum involves a "happiness period" of 45 minutes and five minutes of meditation before each class. It will include meditation, moral values and mental exercises.

4. Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Second Amendment) Bill, 2017

Lok Sabha has passed The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (Second Amendment) Bill, 2017 to abolish the 'no detention policy' in schools.

Highlights of the Bill:

- The Bill amends the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009. The Act was having provision of no detention policy i.e. no child can be held back in any class until completion of elementary school (classes 1-8).
- The Bill amends provision related to no detention policy to empower central or state government to allow schools to hold back child in class 5, class 8, or in both classes. It mandates conducting, regular examination in class 5 and class 8 at end of every academic year.

- In case, child fails class 5, class 8 examinations, he will be given additional instruction and opportunity for a re-examination (within two months from the declaration of the result). If child fails again in re-examination, he may be held back in class 5, class 8, or in both classes.
- The Bill empowers Union and State governments to decide whether to not hold back child in any class till completion of elementary education. Further, Union or State governments will decide manner and conditions subject to which child may be held back.

5. Samagra Shiksha Scheme

- Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has announced 'Padhe Bharat-Badhe Bharat' an initiative to promote reading culture among students. The initiative has been launched under 'Samagra Shiksha'.



- Under this initiative, government will give an annual library grant to schools to allow students widen their ambit of learning.



- The grant will be given to Primary to Senior Secondary levels and will vary between Rs. 5000 and Rs. 20000.
- 'Samagra Shiksha' is an overarching programme for school education extending from Primary till class 12. The programme was introduced in the Union Budget 2018-19 with the aim to treat school education holistically without segmentation of primary and secondary education.
- This programme subsumes the three erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).
- It envisages the 'school' as a continuum from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary to senior secondary levels.

HEALTH

6. Lymphatic Filariasis

- India has highest burden of Lymphatic Filariasis and there is a need of taking leadership role to Eliminate lymphatic filariasis.
- India is hosting the 10th meeting of Global Alliance to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis.
- *Theme:* Celebrating progress towards elimination: Voices from the field on overcoming programme challenges.
- LF or commonly known as Elephantiasis is one of the oldest and most debilitating

neglected disease, which is currently endemic in 73 countries of the world, including India.

- LF is a devastating parasitic infection spread by mosquitoes. The parasites are thread-like worms (filariae) that develop in and then damage the human lymphatic system and associated tissues.
- It is usually contracted in childhood, often before the age of five. The lymphatic system is a network of vessels and specialized tissues that are essential to the maintaining the overall fluid balance and health of organs and limbs and importantly are a major component of the body's immune defence system.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN

7. Janaushadhi Suvidha

- Under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP), the government has launched the 'JANAUSHADHI SUVIDHA', the Oxo-biodegradable Sanitary Napkin. The affordable sanitary napkins will now become available at over 3600 Janaushadhi Kendras functional in 33 States/UTs across India.
- Jan Aushadhi Suvidha comes with a special additive, which makes Sanitary napkin biodegradable when it comes in contact with oxygen after being discarded.
- Objective: This would ensure 'Swachhta, Swasthya and Suvidha' for the underprivileged Women of India and go a



long way in the achievement of vision of Affordable and Quality Healthcare for All.

- About 58% of women aged between 15 to 24 years use locally prepared napkins, sanitary napkins and tampons according to the National Family Health Survey 2015-16. Further, about 78% women in urban areas use hygienic methods of protection during menstrual period; only 48% women in rural areas have access to clean sanitary napkins.

‘Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana’ is a campaign launched by the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Government Of India, to provide quality medicines at affordable prices to the masses through special kendras known as Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra.

Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Jan Aushadhi Kendra (PMBJK) has been set up to provide generic drugs, which are available at lesser prices but are equivalent in quality and efficacy as expensive branded drugs.

8. Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)

- Under Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), the government has provided cash incentives to nearly 23.6 lakh beneficiaries out of an estimated 51.6 lakh a year.
- Pradhan Mantri Matritva Vandana Yojana (PMMVY), previously Indira Gandhi Matritva Sahyog Yojana (IGMSY), is a

maternity benefit program run by the government of India.

- PMMVY is implemented by the Ministry of Women & Child Development in collaboration with State Governments.
- It is Centrally Sponsored Scheme under which the cost sharing ratio between the Centre and the States & UTs with Legislature is 60:40, for North-Eastern States & three Himalayan States, it is 90:10 and 100% Central assistance for Union Territories without Legislature.
- It is a conditional cash transfer scheme for pregnant and lactating women of 19 years of age or above for first two live births.
- It provides partial wage compensation to women for wage-loss during childbirth and child care and to provide conditions for safe delivery and good nutrition and feeding practices.

9. ‘Women Wizards Rule Tech’ programme

It is a programme for women techies unveiled by NASSCOM.

Objective:

- It aims to increase the number of women in senior levels in the Information Technology (IT) industry.
- The Women Wizards Rule Tech was announced in March at the NASSCOM Diversity and Inclusion Summit in Chennai as a joint initiative by the NASSCOM Sector

Skills Council and the Data Security Council of India.

- The programme is designed to support women who are moving up the career ladder, while also paving the way for potential leaders of the future.

NASSCOM:

The National Association of Software and Services Companies (NASSCOM) is a trade association of Indian Information Technology (IT) and Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry. Established in 1988, NASSCOM is a non-profit organisation.

10. SKOCH Award

- Ministry of Women & Child Development has received the 'Best Performing Social Sector Ministry' SKOCH Award for its Achievements and Initiatives.
- The Skoch Awards celebrate human excellence and agents of change in Indian society. They are the highest independently instituted civilian honours in India.
- The Skoch Awards have become the only independent benchmark of best practices in India in the fields of governance, finance, banking, technology, corporate citizenship, economics and inclusive growth.
- Skoch Consultancy Services is a think tank dealing with socio-economic issues with a focus on inclusive growth.

WATER AND SANITATION

11. Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABHY)

- Atal Bhujal Yojana is a Rs.6000 crore Central Sector Scheme of the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation.
- *Objective:* The scheme aims to improve ground water management in priority areas in the country through community participation.
- The scheme is to be implemented over a period of five years from 2018-19 to 2022-23, with World Bank assistance.



**Atal Bhujal Yojana
A Plan to recharge
groundwater**

- The priority areas identified under the scheme fall in the states of Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. These States represent about 25% of the total number of over-exploited, critical and semi-critical blocks in terms of ground water in India.
- They also cover two major types of groundwater systems found in India: alluvial and hard rock aquifers and have varying degrees of institutional readiness and experience in groundwater management.

12. Swachh Iconic Places

- The government has selected ten new iconic sites under Phase III of the flagship project Swachh Iconic Places (SIP) of the Swachh Bharat Mission.
- *Phase I iconic places:* Ajmer Sharif Dargah, CST Mumbai, Golden Temple, Kamakhya Temple, Maikarnika Ghat, Meenakshi Temple, Shri Mata Vaishno Devi, Shree Jagannath Temple, The Taj Mahal and Tirupati Temple.



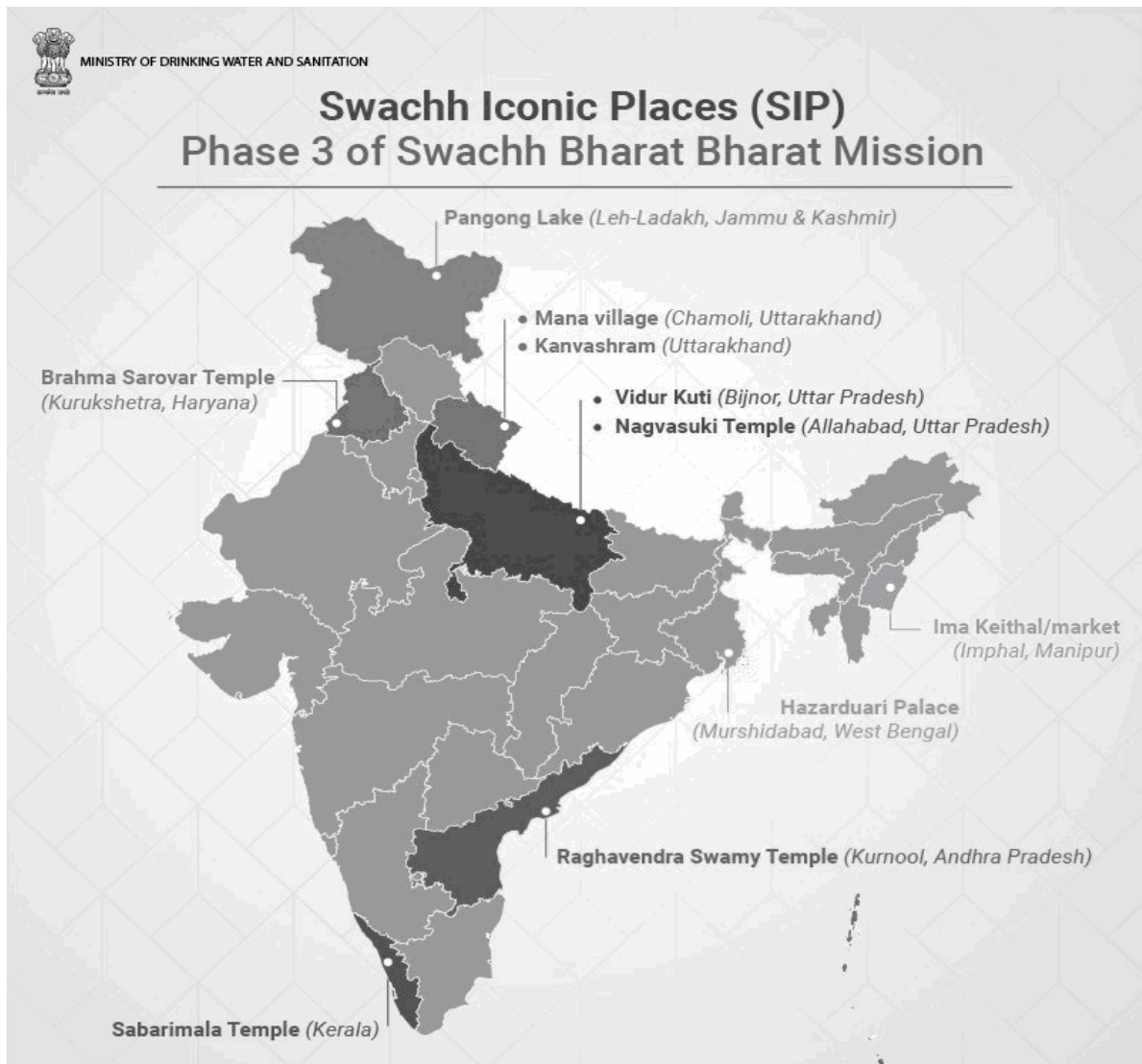
- *Phase II iconic places:* Gangotri, Yamunotri, Mahakaleshwar Temple, Charminar, Convent and Church of St. Francis of Assisi, Kalady, Gommateswara, BaidyanathDham, Gaya Tirth and Somnath temple.



- Phase III includes RaghavendraSwamy Temple (Kurnool, Andhra Pradesh); Hazardwari Palace (Murshidabad, West Bengal); Brahma Sarovar Temple

(Kurukshetra, Haryana); VidurKuti (Bijnor, Uttar Pradesh); Mana village (Chamoli, Uttarakhand); Pangong Lake (Leh-Ladakh, J&K); Nagvasuki Temple (Allahabad, Uttar

Pradesh); ImaKeithal/market (Imphal, Manipur); Sabarimala Temple (Kerala); and Kanvashram (Uttarakhand).



- Swachh Iconic Places (SIP) is an initiative of Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation under Swachh Bharat Mission. Initiated as a project to implement Prime Minister's vision to take iconic places and their surroundings to

higher standards of Swachhata, so that all visitors benefit and also take away home the message of cleanliness, Swachh Iconic Places is now in its second phase.



13. Swajal Scheme

- The government recently launched Swajal schemes in 115 aspirational districts of the country. It will involve an outlay of Rs 700 crores through flexible-funds under the

existing National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) budget.

- Swajal is a community owned drinking water programme for sustained drinking water supply.

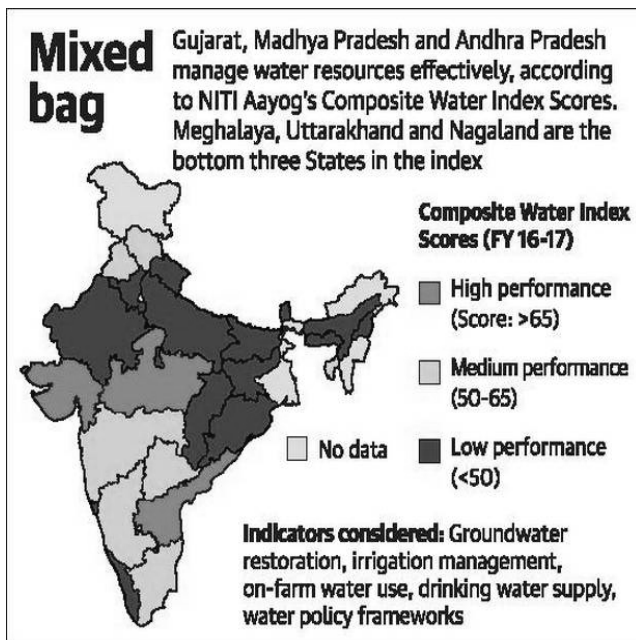
Swajal: Community-owned Drinking Water

- Community-based rural drinking water in rural India through pilot projects in 6 States
- First Swajal pilots are demand-driven and are implemented where the community is willing to come forward from concepts to commissioning and beyond, taking full ownership of the schemes.
- Rural local government in partnership with rural communities to plan, design, construct, operate and maintain their water supply and sanitation schemes
- State Government and its sector institutions shall act as supporter, facilitator and co-financier and as per need shall provide technical assistance, training
- Under the scheme, 90% of the project cost will be taken care by the Government and the remaining 10% of the project cost will be contributed by the community. The Operations and management of the project will be taken care of by the local villagers.

- CWMI aims to enable effective water management in Indian states in the face of this growing crisis.
- The index would provide useful information for the states and concerned Central ministries and departments enabling them to formulate and implement suitable strategies for better management of water resources.
- 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.

14. Composite Water Management Index (CWMI)

- NITI Aayog has released its report on Composite Water Management Index (CWMI).
- 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.



- 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.

15. Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2018

- Union Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation (MDWS) have launched Swachh Survekshan Grameen 2018 (SSG).
- Swachh Survekshan Grameen is a rural cleanliness survey to rank all states and districts on basis of qualitative and quantitative evaluation.
- The objective of SSG 2018 is to undertake ranking of states and districts on basis of their performance attained on key quantitative and qualitative Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen (SBM-G) parameters. The rankings will be

based on taking into account set of comprehensive cleanliness parameters.

- The criteria of SSG-2018 include survey of public places, citizens' perspective of cleanliness, their recommendations and data from SBM-G. As part of it, 6,980 villages in 698 districts across India will be covered. It will cover total 34,000 public places namely schools, anganwadis, public health centres, haat/bazaars/religious places in these villages.

16. Ganga Vriksharopan Abhiyan

- The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) recently organised the 'Ganga Vriksharopan Abhiyan' in five main Ganga basin states – Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal. The State Forest Departments of these five states acted as the Nodal Agencies for the smooth and effective execution of the campaign.
- The campaign was initiated as part of the Forest Interventions in Ganga (FIG) component of Namami Gange Programme.
- It was aimed at bringing greater awareness among people and other stakeholders regarding the importance of afforestation for the task of Ganga Rejuvenation.
- As part of the campaign, schools, colleges and departments were requested to "Adopt a Plant" for turning this campaign into a people's movement.



SKILL DEVELOPMENT

17. Van Dhan Vikas Kendras

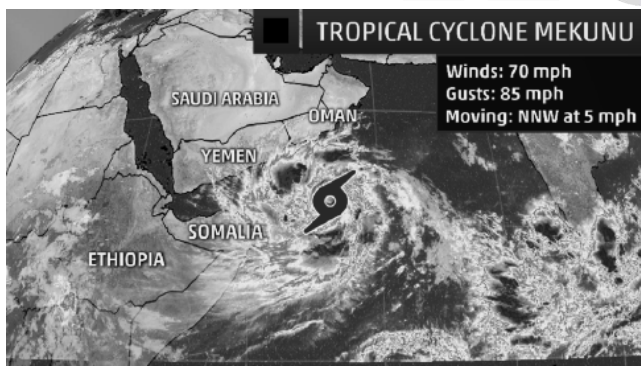
- Government proposes to set up 3000 Van Dhan Kendras involving 30,000 SHGs across the country.
- The initiative aims to promote MFPs-centric livelihood development of tribal gatherers and artisans.
- It mainstreams the tribal community by promoting primary level value addition to MFP at grassroots level.
- Through this initiative, the share of tribals in the value chain of Non-Timber Forest Produce is expected to rise from the present 20% to around 60%.
- The scheme will be implemented through Ministry of Tribal Affairs as Nodal Department at the Central Level and TRIFED as Nodal Agency at the National Level.
- At State level, the State Nodal Agency for MFPs and the District collectors are envisaged to play a pivot role in scheme implementation at grassroot level.
- Locally the Kendras are proposed to be managed by a Managing Committee (an SHG) consisting of representatives of Van Dhan SHGs in the cluster.
- Composition: As per the plan, TRIFED will facilitate establishment of MFP-led multi-purpose Van Dhan Vikas Kendras, a cluster of 10 SHGs comprising of 30 tribal MFP gatherers each, in the tribal areas.
- Minor Forest Produce (MFP) is a major source of livelihood for tribals living in forest areas. It provides them critical subsistence during the lean seasons, particularly for primitive tribal groups such as hunter gatherers, and the landless. Tribals derive 20-40% of their annual income from MFP on which they spend major portion of their time.
- This activity has strong linkage to women's financial empowerment as most of the MFPs are collected and used/sold by women. MFP sector has the potential to create about 10 million workdays annually in the country.

3

International Issues

1. OP Nistar

- It is an evacuation process of Stranded Indians from Socotra, Yemen.
- A very severe Cyclonic Storm Mekenu crossed the Yemeni Island of Socotra on 24 May 2018, leaving 38 Indians stranded on the island with limited food and water.
- Based on this information, the Indian Navy undertook two aerial sorties on 27th and 28th May 2018 to search for the missing Indians. INS Sunayna, deployed on a mission based deployment in the Gulf of Aden was pressed into action to evacuate the 38 Indian nationals from Socotra.



- The operation, code name 'NISTAR', was carried out on the morning of 03rd June 18 off the coast of Socotra. The evacuated Indians were embarked onboard and immediately provided with medical care, food, water and telephone facilities to call and reassure their families at home. All 38 have been reported to be safe.

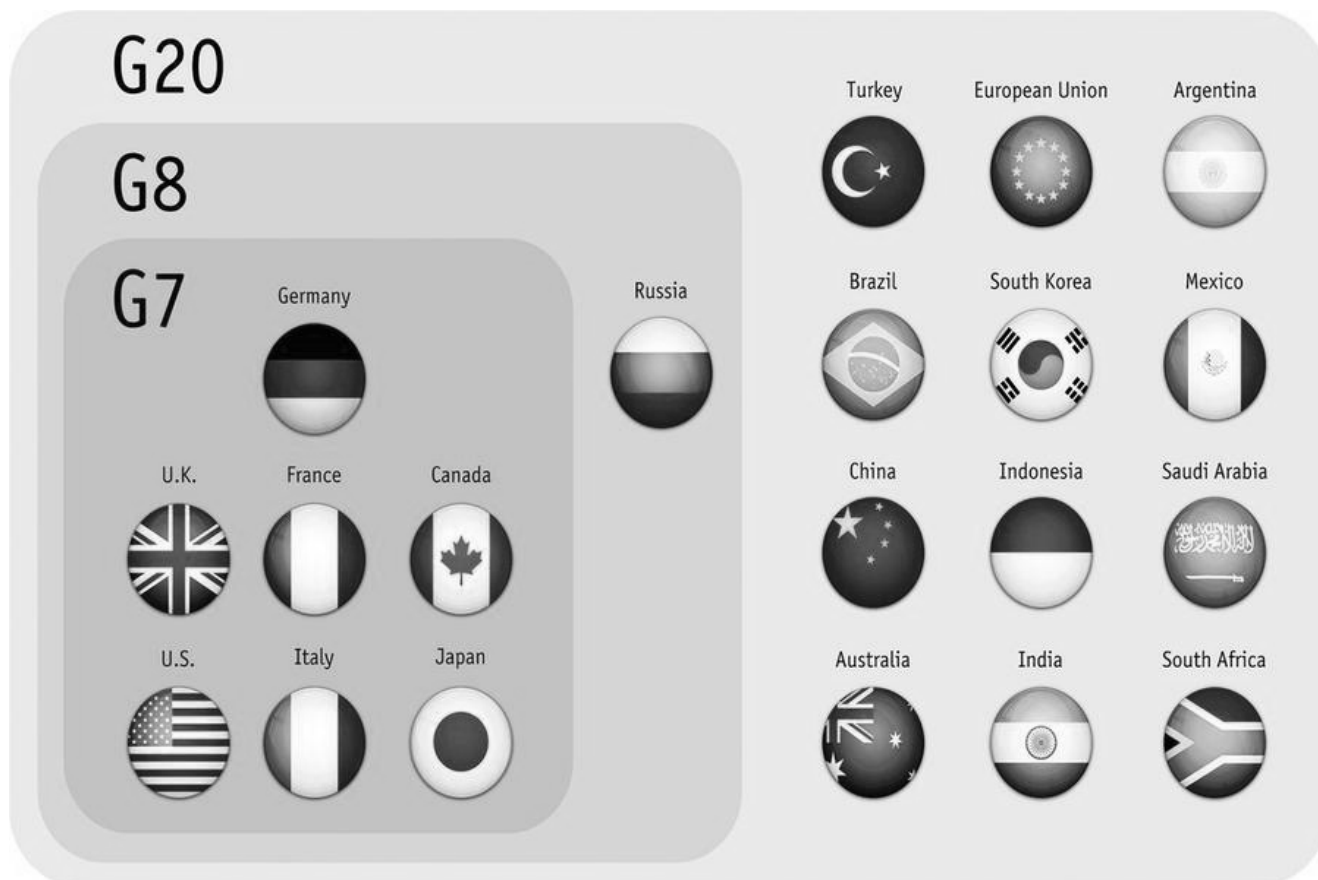
2. UN Security Council

- The UN Security Council is composed of 15 Members with five permanent members and ten non-permanent members. P5 countries are: China, France, Russia, U K, and US.
- Each year, five out of ten non-permanent UN Security Council members are elected by the UN General Assembly for two years term by the General Assembly (with end of term date). The non-permanent seats are distributed on a geographical basis as follows: Asia-2, Africa-3, Latin America and the Caribbean-2, Eastern Europe-1, Western Europe and other countries-2.
- Each candidate country needed to secure two thirds of the votes in order to clinch a seat.
- End-of-term countries Dec31, 2018 are Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Netherlands, Ethiopia and Sweden

- New members elected from Jan01, 2019 are Belgium, the Dominican Republic, Germany, Indonesia and South Africa
- Countries to end term by Dec31, 2019 are Côte d'Ivoire/Ivory Coast, Equatorial Guinea, Kuwait, Peru and Poland

3. G7 bloc

- 44th annual G7 Summit is being held in Quebec, Canada.



- G7 Summit is an event conducted annually where world leaders from seven powerful economies of the world-US, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Japan and Italy come together to discuss burning issues happening around the globe. They, by mutual understanding, also form policies or figure out remedies for the concerned issue.
- 4. Sanchi Stupa of India and Pho Minh Pagoda of Viet Nam
 - Cabinet approves MoU between India and Viet Nam on Joint issue of postage stamp. Joint Issue depicts Sanchi Stupa of India and Pho Minh Pagoda of Viet Nam.



Sanchi Stupa:

- Commissioned in 3rd century BCE, Expansion/additions/restoration works/ made in different periods. Commissioned by Emperor Ashoka of the Maurya Dynasty.
- Located 46 km north-east of Bhopal, the capital city of Madhya Pradesh, India.
- Architectural Style: Buddhist Art and Architecture.
- It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Pho Minh Pagoda:

- The pagoda was originally built during the Ly Dynasty and later expanded in 1262 during the Tran Dynasty.
- It was a place for high-ranking mandarins and the aristocracy of the Tran Royal Court to worship and lead their religious life.

5. International Decade for Action

- In order to accelerate efforts towards meeting water-related challenges, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2018-2028 as the International Decade for Action “Water for Sustainable Development”.
- Republic of Tajikistan and United Nations are jointly organizing a high-level Conference on this matter.
- The Water Action Decade commenced on World Water Day, 22 March 2018, and will end on World Water Day, 22 March 2028.

Objectives:

- Focus on the sustainable development and integrated management of water resources
- Focus on the cooperation and partnership at all levels in order to achieve internationally agreed water-related goals and targets

- The Decade also highlights the importance of promoting efficient water usage at all levels, taking into account the water, food, energy, environment nexus; and stresses the importance of the participation and full involvement of all relevant stakeholders, including women, children, young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and local communities.

6. Nuclear arsenals around the globe

- Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has released its 2018 edition of the yearly report on the current state of armaments, disarmament and international security.



- There are nine countries which have nuclear warheads. They include Russia, the US, the UK, France, China, Israel, India, Pakistan and North Korea.

7. UN Human Rights Council

- The United States withdrew from the United Nations Human Rights Council accusing it of a “chronic bias against Israel”. Washington’s withdrawal is the latest US rejection of multilateral engagement after it pulled out of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.
- The US problem with the body is twofold: the make-up of its membership and what it

considers a disproportionate focus on allegations of human rights abuses committed by its ally, Israel.

8. Singapore Summit

- US President Donald Trump and North Korea leader Kim Jong Un created history by coming together at the US-North Korea summit held in Singapore, which resulted in the signing of a “comprehensive document”.
- It marks the establishment of new US-DPRK (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) relations.



- US had committed to provide security guarantees to North Korea and end US-South Korea Joint war games.
- Reaffirming the Panmunjom declaration, Chairman Kim committed to work towards complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. This can reduce the dangers of proliferation of nuclear weapons in future.
- This opens the doorway for the reunification of the Korean peninsula in the long run.
- However, joint statement issued by the two leaders was brief, vague and generic with probable differences in interpretations of denuclearization by both parties.
- Also, sanctions on North Korea also continue at present.

9. Nelson Mandela International Day

- Nelson Mandela International Day 2018 marks 100 years since the birth of Nelson Mandela (18 July 1918).
- Nelson Mandela International Day is a global event held annually to honor former South African president and anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela.
- The event started after the Nelson Mandela Foundation and 46664, a concert series that benefits AIDS victims referencing Mandela's prison number 46664, first proposed the idea of a worldwide day honoring the work and legacy of Nelson Mandela in April 2009.

- The first Mandela Day was held on Mandela's 91st birthday on July 18, 2009 to promote volunteering and community service, being marked worldwide with community service events, art exhibits, fundraisers and a concert at Radio City Music Hall in New York City.
- The United Nations soon took interest and supported the idea of a global day honoring Mandela, declaring in November 2009 the marking of July 18 as Nelson Mandela International Day.

10. Delhi Dialogue

- 10th edition of the Delhi Dialogue (DD X) was held in New Delhi. This is the first major event to be organized after the ASEAN-India Commemorative Summit which was held in New Delhi in January 2018.
- *Theme:* "Strengthening India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation".
- It is a premier annual track event to discuss politico-security, economic and socio-cultural engagement between India and ASEAN.
- It has been held annually since 2009 and political leaders, policy makers, senior officials, diplomats, think tanks and academicians from both sides participate in the discussions pertaining to ASEAN-India relations.
- It is aimed at finding a common ground and expanding the scope of cooperation between India and ASEAN nations.

4

Environmental Issues

1. 'Blue Flag' tag

- The first beach in Asia to get the Blue Flag certification will be the Chandrabhaga beach on the Konark coast of Odisha.
- Twelve more beaches in the country are being developed by the Society for Integrated Coastal Management (SICOM).
- SICOM is an Environment Ministry's body working for the management of coastal areas, in accordance with the Blue Flag standards.
- Blue flag project was launched in December 2017 by the Environment Ministry.
- The prime objective of the project is to enhance standards of cleanliness and upkeep basic amenities at beaches.
- Under the project, each state or union territory has been asked to nominate a beach which will be funded through the ongoing Integrated Coastal Management Programme.

2. Uranium contamination

- Scientists have found widespread Uranium contamination in groundwater from aquifers across 16 states in India, much above the WHO provisional standard for the country.
- The WHO has set a provisional safe drinking water standard of 30 micrograms of uranium per litre, a level that is consistent with the U.S. EPA standards. However, uranium is not yet included in the list of contaminants

monitored under the Bureau of Indian Standards' Drinking Water Specifications.

- Factors responsible for Uranium contamination:
 - Over-pumping of aquifers' groundwater.
 - While the primary source of uranium is geogenic (naturally occurring), anthropogenic (human caused) factors such as groundwater table decline and nitrate pollution may further enhance uranium mobilisation.
 - Other factors include the amount of uranium contained in an aquifer's rocks.

3. World Oceans Day

- World Ocean Day is observed every year on June 8th.
- *Focus for 2018:* Preventing plastic pollution and encouraging solutions for a healthy ocean.





- The concept of 'World Oceans Day' was first proposed in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro as a way to celebrate our world's shared ocean and our personal connection to the sea, as well as to raise awareness about the crucial role the ocean plays in our lives and the important ways people can help protect it.

4. World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought

- The World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought is observed every year on June 17th to promote public awareness of international efforts to combat desertification. The day is a unique moment to remind everyone that land degradation neutrality is achievable through problem-solving, strong community involvement and co-operation at all levels.
- *2018 Theme:* "Land has true value – invest in it."

5. Toxic air affective

- Besides affecting human health, air pollution is also causing malnutrition in trees by harming Mycorrhizal fungi.

- Mycorrhizal fungi are hosted by the trees in their roots to receive nutrients from the soil.
- These fungi provide essential nutrients like nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium from soil in exchange for carbon from the tree.
- This plant-fungal symbiotic relationship is crucial for the health of the tree.
- High levels of the nutrition elements like nitrogen and phosphorus in the mycorrhizae changes them to act as pollutants rather than nutrients.
- The signs of malnutrition can be seen in the form of discoloured leaves and excessive falling of leaves. Ecosystem changes can also negatively affect tree health.

6. National Disaster Risk Index

- The Union ministry of home affairs with the support of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has prepared for the first time a national disaster risk index for India.
- The disaster risk index would map hazards and vulnerabilities including economic vulnerabilities across 640 districts and all states including UTs.

DISASTER-PRONE

High-Risk Districts on Disaster

District	State	Rank
North 24 Parganas	West Bengal	1
Pune	Maharashtra	2
South 24 parganas	West Bengal	3
Thane	Maharashtra	4
Hoogly	West Bengal	5
Howrah	West Bengal	6
Bangalore	Karnataka	7
Nashik	Maharashtra	8
Gulbarga	Karnataka	9
Mumbai suburban	Maharashtra	10

Why Pune? On a scale of 10 it has scored 9.48 due to highest exposure to hazard and vulnerability, while its capacity to deal with risk is lower at 4.43 (out of 10). Pune is affected by drought (7.93 on 10), but lower than Nashik's at 8.35



North 24 Parganas scores 8.52 (out of 10) on exposure to hazard and vulnerability and 3.64 on capacity to deal with risk. On floods it scores 7.97 out of 10



South 24 Parganas scores 8.48 on risks and 3.64 for its capacity to deal with risks. Highest risk from cyclone, and scores 8.24



Disaster Risk Index of States

States	Rank
Maharashtra	1
West Bengal	2
UP	3
MP	4
Karnataka	6
Assam	7
Andhra	8
Gujarat	9
Bihar	10

Note: The All-India ranking of these states and districts has been assessed on six parameters: hazards; vulnerability; hazard-specific vulnerability; hazard & vulnerability exposure; capacity and risk

- The index factors in exposure of population, agriculture and livestock, environmental risk and the steps taken by the administration to mitigate the risks.

7. AMCDRR 2018

- The Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction 2018 (AMCDRR 2018) will be held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. It is convened by the UN Office for DRR (UNISDR) and the Government of Mongolia.
- The conference will represent a key milestone for reflection on three years into the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030. Specifically, the conference will enable

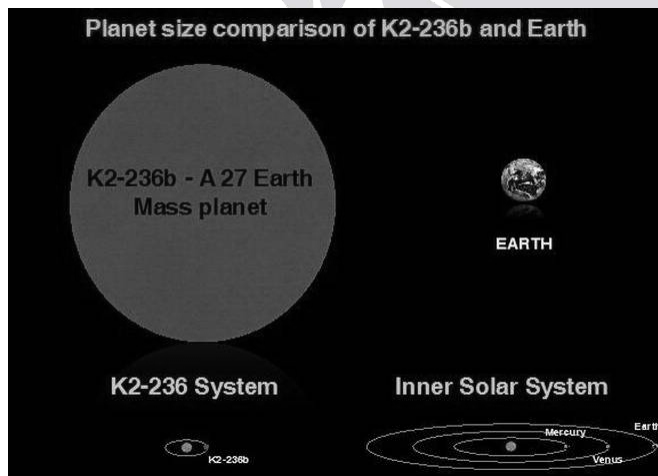
governments and stakeholders to review progress made against the commitments at the AMCDRR 2016, i.e. the New Delhi Declaration, the Asia Regional Plan, and ten stakeholder voluntary action statements.

- *Theme of the AMCDRR 2018:* 'Preventing Disaster Risk: Protecting Sustainable Development'.
- Established in 2005, AMCDRR is a biennial conference jointly organized by different Asian countries and the UNISDR.
- India hosted the second AMCDRR in New Delhi in 2007.

5 *Science and Technology*

1. 'EPIC' planet

- A distant planet six times bigger than Earth and revolving around a Sun-like star about 600 light years away has been spotted for the first time by the Scientists from ISRO.
- The planet has been named EPIC 211945201b (or K2-236b). The host star is named EPIC 211945201 or K2-236.
- The planet is smaller in size than Saturn and bigger than Neptune. Its mass is about 27 times Earth's and six times that of Earth at radius. The scientists estimate that over 60% of its mass could be made up of heavy elements like ice, silicates and iron.



- With this discovery India has joined a handful of countries which have discovered planets around stars.

- The discovery was made using a PRL-designed spectrograph, PARAS, to measure and confirm the mass of the new planet.

2. KATRIN experiment

- Researchers in Germany with the Karlsruhe Tritium Neutrino experiment have started collecting data to determine the mass of the universe's lightest particle- neutrino. Those are sometimes called "ghost particles" because they're so difficult to detect.
- The KATRIN experiment is currently set up and commissioned on the Campus North of the Karlsruhe Institute for Technology.
- The experiment is collaboration between national and international partners with currently more than 150 scientists, engineers, technicians and students.
- KATRIN measures the neutrino mass in a model-independent way via ultrahigh precision measurements of the kinematics of electrons from beta-decay.

3. REMOVEDEBRIS

- The first spacecraft to demonstrate active space debris-removal technologies such as a harpoon, a net and a drag sail in orbit has been released from the International Space Station to commence its mission.



- RemoveDebris is an EU (European Union) research project to develop and fly a low cost in-orbit demonstrator mission that aims to de-risk and verify technologies needed for future ADR (Active Debris Removal) missions.
- RemoveDebris is aimed at performing key ADR technology demonstrations (e.g., capture, deorbiting) representative of an operational scenario during a low-cost mission using novel key technologies for ADR. The project is based on and aimed at contributing to global/European ADR roadmaps.

4. **Ban on Oxytocin**

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has restricted the manufacture of Oxytocin formulations for domestic use to public sector only. Coupled with this, it has also banned the import of Oxytocin and its formulations. The order comes into effect from July 1.
- Only Karnataka Antibiotics & Pharmaceuticals Ltd. (KAPL), a public sector company, will manufacture this drug for domestic use. It will supply the drug to registered hospitals and clinics in public and private sector directly.
- The drug is misused in the dairy industry where livestock is injected with Oxytocin to make them release milk at a time convenient to farmers.

- Oxytocin is also used to increase the size of vegetables such as pumpkins, watermelons, eggplants, gourds, and cucumbers.

5. **FASTags**

- The Transport Ministry has proposed to dispense with fitness certificate for new vehicles and make it mandatory to have vehicle tracking system and FASTags for electronic toll collection for all commercial vehicles in its draft amendment to the Commercial Motor Vehicles Act.
- FASTag is a device that uses Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) technology for making toll payments directly from the prepaid account linked to it.
- It is affixed on the windscreen of vehicle and enables to drive through toll plazas without waiting.
- The tag has a validity of 5 years and after purchase, it only needs to be recharged or topped up. The service is applicable to all kinds of vehicles but use of the service is currently voluntary.

6. **Meghalayan phase**

- Scientists have created a new phase in Earth's geological history and named it Meghalayan, after a stalagmite from a cave in the Indian state of Meghalaya that helped define climatic events 4,200 years ago, marking the beginning of the phase that continues till today.

Eonothem/ Eon	Erathem/ Era	System/ Period	Series/ Epoch	Stage/ age	GSSP	Numerical Age (Ma)
Phanerozoic	Cenozoic	Quaternary	Holocene	Meghalayan		Present
				Northgrippian		0.0042
				Greenlandian		0.0082
			Pleistocene	Upper		0.0117
				Middle		0.126
				Calabrian		0.781
				Gelasian		1.80
		Neogene	Pliocene	Piacenzian		2.58
				Zanclean		3.6
			Miocene	Messinian		5.33
				Tortonian		7.246
				Serravallian		11.63
				Langhian		13.82
				Burdigalian		15.97
				Aquitania		20.44
						23.03

Here
Ma-Mega annum
GSSP-Global
Stratotype Section
and Point

- The Meghalayan Age began with a mega global drought that devastated ancient agricultural civilisations from Egypt to China. It is part of a longer period known as the Holocene Epoch, which reflects everything that has happened over the past 11,700 years.
- Evidence of the climatic event has been found in sediments on all seven continents, including those from Meghalaya.
- The Meghalayan is unique because it is the first interval in Earth's geological history that coincided with a major cultural event, as agricultural societies struggled to recover from the shift in climate.
- The droughts over a 200-year period resulted in human migrations in Egypt, Greece, Syria, Palestine, Mesopotamia, the Indus valley and the Yangtze River valley.

6

Defence

1. Pinaka rocket

- The indigenous Pinaka rocket system of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is being evolved into a precision-guided missile, with enhanced range and accuracy to hit its targets.
- The rocket has been developed by the Armament cluster of the DRDO, with a lead from Pune-based Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE).
- It is used to neutralize the enemy's positions that are strategically important for the enemy. The advanced versions of this system can also be used to conduct surgical strikes even without entering into the enemy area.



- The launcher can fire 12 rockets with 1.2 tonnes of high explosives within 44 seconds and destroy a target area of 4-square km at a time.

- Pinaka is capable of working in different modes—autonomous mode, stand-alone mode, remote mode and manual mode.
- The second variant of Pinaka, known as Mark-II, has a maximum range of 75 km.
- DRDO is working with Israel's IMI (Israel Military Industries) to develop Pinaka Mark-III which will use IMI's Trajectory Correction System (TCS) that will enhance the accuracy of the attack.

2. Agni-V

- India's longest-range ballistic missile, Agni-V, will be inducted into the nuclear arsenal very soon. It is a strategic asset which will act as a deterrent.
- It is a surface-to-surface missile which can carry nuclear warhead weighing 1.5 tonnes to a distance of over 5,000 km and is the longest missile in India's arsenal capable of reaching most parts of China.
- The missile features many new indigenously-developed technologies, including the very high accuracy Ring Laser Gyro based Inertial Navigation System (RINS), and the most modern and accurate Micro Navigation System (MINS) which improves the accuracy of the missile.

1. Tripura's "State Fruit"



- President Ram Nath Kovind has declared Tripura's queen variety pineapple as "state fruit".

2. 100 Years of Voting Rights

- June 10, 2018 marked 100 years since the first women won the right to vote in Britain.
- The Representation of the People Act, 1918 granted property-owning British women over age 30 the right to vote.

3. Nikkei Asia Prize

- Noted social reformer and founder of Sulabh International, Bindeshwar Pathak was recently honored with Japan's prestigious 'Nikkei Asia Prize for Culture and Community'. The award was given to him for his significant work in tackling *poor hygiene and discrimination*.
- The Nikkei Asia Prize is an award which recognizes the achievements of people and

organizations that have improved the lives of people throughout Asia.

- The awards were created and presented by Nikkei Inc, one of the largest media corporations in Japan.
- Launched in 1996, the program honors people in Asia who have made significant contributions in one of the three areas: Regional growth; Science, Technology and Innovation; and Culture.
- Former PM Manmohan Singh and Infosys Chairman Narayan Murti are among the few Indians who have won the prize in the past.

4. National Data Centre

- The Centre will set up the country's biggest data centre in Bhopal with a capacity to host five lakh virtual servers. It will be set up by the National Informatics Centre (NIC), under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- This will be the fifth National Data Centre after the ones at Bhubaneswar, Delhi, Hyderabad and Pune.

5. Year of Disabled Soldiers

- To honour soldiers who have been disabled in line of duty, while serving the Nation and to celebrate the undying spirit of 'Soldiering', Indian Army is observing the year 2018 as the 'Year of Disabled Soldiers in Line of Duty'.

- The primary focus is towards alleviating the sufferings of these soldiers, who have done their duty with utmost dedication to the Nation and have been disabled for the life.
- The endeavour this year is to provide a onetime financial assistance to disabled soldiers who have been boarded out from service on medical grounds and are rendered non-employable due to their medical or physical conditions.

6. Governor's rule in J & K

- The state of Jammu and Kashmir is all set to see a governor's rule following the sudden break in ties between BJP and PDP and subsequent resignation of chief minister Mehbooba Mufti.
- The imposition of governor's rule in J&K is slightly different than that in other states.
- In other states, the president's rule is imposed under the Article 356 of Constitution of India. In J & K, governor's rule is mentioned under Article 370 section 92 – 'Provisions in case of failure of constitutional machinery in the State.'

7. India Smart Cities Awards

- Nine awards have been announced under the India Smart Cities Awards.
- India Smart Cities Award was launched on 25 June 2017 with an objective to reward cities, projects and innovative ideas, promoting sustainable development in cities.

- There are 3 categories of awards- Project Award, Innovative Idea Award and City Award.

Winners:

- The city award is being given to Surat for showing great momentum in implementation of projects especially in the categories of urban environment, transport and mobility and sustainable integrated development.
- The Innovative Idea award is being given to a project/idea particularly remarkable for its innovative, bottom-up and transformative approach towards achievement of sustainable integrated development. Joint winners in this category are Bhopal for their Integrated Command and Control Centre (ICCC) and Ahmedabad for Safe and Secure Ahmedabad (SASA) Project.

8. 4th International Yoga Day 2018

The International Yoga Day is celebrated every year on June 21. It was first introduced by the United Nations on June 21, 2015.

Objective:

- The main aim is to create awareness worldwide on the importance of staying fit and healthy.
- Theme for 2018 is 'Yoga for peace'.





June 21 is the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and has special significance in many parts of the world. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had proposed this date at the United Nations General Assembly 2014 and hence this day is selected as International Yoga day.

9. Humanitarian forensics

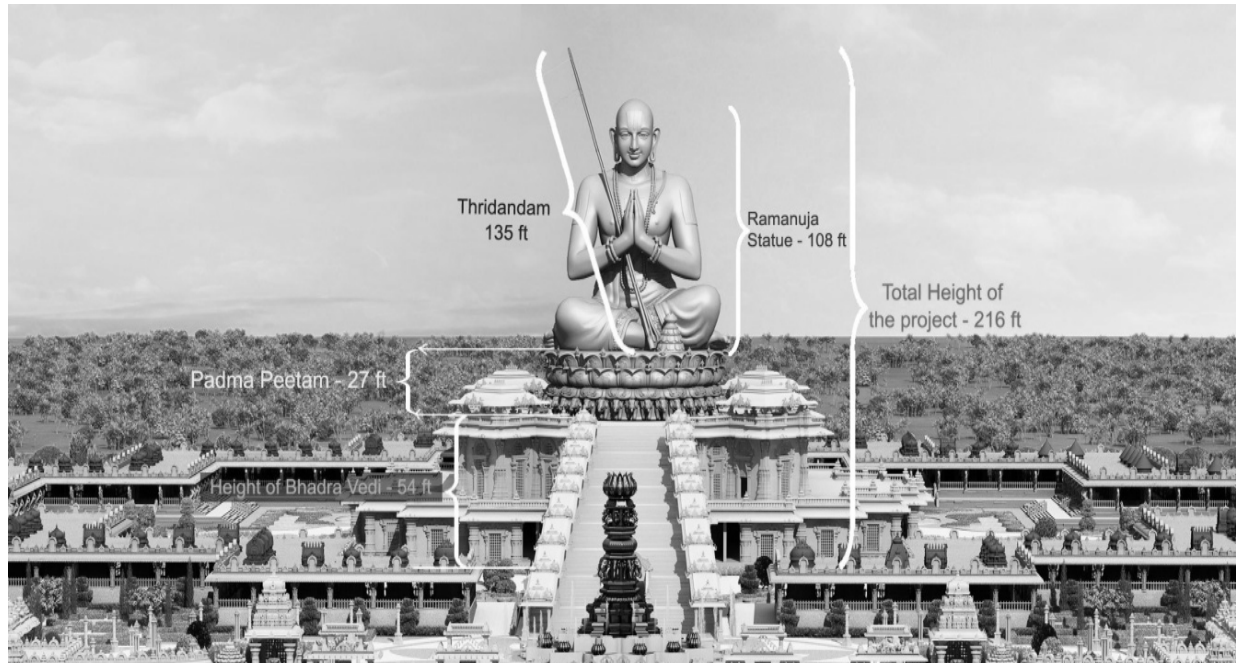
- International Centre for Humanitarian Forensics (ICHF) was recently inaugurated at the Gujarat Forensic Sciences University (GFSU).
- This will be the world's first international centre for humanitarian forensics.
- It is a joint venture of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Regional Delegation for India, Bhutan, Nepal and the Maldives, and GFSU.
- It was inaugurated at the Gujarat Forensic Sciences University (GFSU).
- This centre will help in proper management of bodies in times of crisis.
- Gujarat Forensic Sciences University (GFSU) is a state university in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. It is the first university in the world solely dedicated to forensic and investigative science.

10. World Food Prize

- Dr. Lawrence Haddad and Dr. David Nabarro will receive the 2018 World Food Prize for their individual and complementary global leadership in elevating maternal and child undernutrition.
- The World Food Prize is considered one of the most prominent global awards for individuals whose breakthrough achievements alleviate hunger and promote global food security.
- It carries \$250,000 cash prize. The Prize is presented each October on or around UN World Food Day (October 16).
- Norman E. Borlaug, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1970 for his work in global agriculture, envisioned a prize that would honor those who have made significant and measurable contributions to improving the world's food supply.

11. Ramanuja statue

- A 216-foot-tall statue of Ramanuja will be built at Hyderabad. When unveiled, it is set to become the world's second tallest statue of a seated figure.



- Currently, the Great Buddha of Thailand is the tallest statue, at 302-feet. Once the Ramanujacharya statue is unveiled, it will become the second tallest, a distinction now held by the Guanyin figure on Mount Xiqiao in China's Guangdong region, at 203 feet.
- Ramanujacharya was a Hindu theologian, philosopher, and one of the most important exponents of the Sri Vaishnavism tradition within Hinduism.
- His philosophical foundations for devotionalism were influential to the Bhakti movement.
- He is famous as the chief proponent of Vishishtadvaita subschool of Vedānta.
- He wrote influential texts, such as bhāṣya on the Brahma Sutras and the Bhagavad Gita, all in Sanskrit.

12. WORLD UNESCO HERITAGE SITE

- In a Remarkable Achievement, India gets its 37th WORLD UNESCO World HERITAGE SITE. The decision was taken at the 42nd session of the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO at Manama in Bahrain.
- 37th site: Victorian Gothic and Art Deco Ensemble of Mumbai.



- This makes Mumbai city the second city in India after Ahmedabad to be inscribed on the World Heritage List.



- In the past 5 years alone, India has managed to get inscribed seven of its properties/sites on the World Heritage List of UNESCO.
- India now has overall 37 World Heritage Inscriptions with 29 Cultural, 07 Natural and 01 Mixed sites.
- While India stands second largest in number after China in terms of number of World Heritage properties in ASPAC (Asia and Pacific) region, it is overall sixth in the world.

A World Heritage site is classified as a natural or man-made area or a structure that is of international importance, and a space which requires special protection. These sites are officially recognised by the UN and the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation, also known as UNESCO. UNESCO believes that the sites classified as World Heritage are important for humanity, and they hold cultural and physical significance.

13. “Space force”

- U.S. President Donald Trump is planning to create a “space force” or a sixth branch of the American armed forces. This has taken many by surprise within and outside the U.S.
- The purpose is to deny the Russians and the Chinese advantages in space. The main intention is to see that the U.S. establishes and maintains dominance in space.

14. Electronic Census of India

- According to an amended rule notified by the Registrar-General of India (RGI), the data collected during the 2021 Census will be stored electronically, the first time since the decennial exercise was conducted in 1951 in Independent India.
- The decennial Census of India has been conducted 15 times, as of 2011. While it has been conducted every 10 years, beginning in 1872, the first complete census was taken in the year 1881.
- Post 1949, it has been conducted by the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India under the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India.
- All the census since 1951 are conducted under 1948 Census of India Act.

15. Behdienkhlam Festival

- Behdienkhlam is a major festival of the people in the Jaintia Hills, Meghalaya.
- It is celebrated to invoke the gods for a bumper harvest and drive away plague.
- It is the ritualistic expression of the relentless struggle of mankind to overcome the destructive forces of nature, including diseases, since the dawn of civilization.
- During the festival, decorated and colourful raths are immersed in ‘Wah Ainar,’ a muddy pool.



- The non-Christian 'Pnar' people who believe either in the traditional faith of 'Niamtre' or Hinduism observe this festival.

16. Brus of Mizoram

- An agreement has been signed by Government of India, Governments of Mizoram and Tripura and Mizoram Bru Displaced People's Forum (MBDPF) regarding Brus of Mizoram.
- The central government will provide financial assistance for rehabilitation of Bru community members in Mizoram and address their issues of security, education, livelihood, etc. in consultation with the governments of Mizoram and Tripura.
- A bout of ethnic violence forced thousands of people from the Bru tribe to leave their homes in Mizoram. As many as 32,876 people belonging to 5,407 families are living in the refugee camps in the Jampui Hills of Tripura.
- The displaced Bru people from Mizoram have been living in various camps in Tripura since 1997. In 1997, the murder of a Mizo forest guard at the Dampa Tiger Reserve in Mizoram's Mamit district allegedly by Bru militants led to a violent backlash against the community, forcing several thousand people to flee to neighbouring Tripura.
- The Bru militancy was a reactionary movement against Mizo nationalist groups who had demanded in the mid-1990s that the Brus be left out of the state's electoral rolls,

contending that the tribe was not indigenous to Mizoram.

The Brus, also referred to as the Reangs, are spread across the northeastern states of Tripura, Assam, Manipur, and Mizoram.

17. Agartala Airport renamed

- Cabinet approves renaming of Agartala Airport, Tripura as Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore Airport, Agartala.
- Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore, who ascended the throne of the erstwhile Tripura Princely State in 1923, was an enlightened and benevolent ruler. Agartala Airport was constructed in 1942 on the land donated by Maharaja Bir Bikram Manikya Kishore.

18. Simultaneous elections

- During recent consultations with the Law Commission of India, as many as nine parties expressed their reservations while four parties supported holding of simultaneous elections.
- Simultaneous elections were held in the country during the first two decades after Independence up to 1967. Dissolution of certain Assemblies in 1968 and 1969 followed by the dissolution of the Lok Sabha led to the "disruption of the conduct of simultaneous elections.
- Simultaneous elections will help save public money.
- It will be a big relief for political parties that are always in campaign mode.



- It will allow political parties to focus more on policy and governance.

19. Minority status to Jews

- Gujarat Government has granted religious minority status to Jews living in the state.
- Now, Jews living in Gujarat will get religious minority rights envisaged in Constitution of India and various acts and rules of the state government.
- Gujarat is third state in India to grant religious minority status to Jews after West Bengal and Maharashtra.
- Six religious communities, viz. Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians (Parsis) and Jains have been notified in Gazette of India as minority communities by Union Government all over India.

Main Jews groups in India:

- Cochin Jews.
- Chennai/Madras Jews.
- Bene Israel.
- Baghdadi Jews.
- Delhi Jews.
- Bnei Menashe.
- Bene Ephraim (Telugu Jews).

20. World's Oldest Color

- Scientists have discovered the oldest color in the geological record- the bright pink pigment aged 1.1 billion years old. The bright pink pigments are the molecular fossils of chlorophyll that were produced by ancient

photosynthetic organisms inhabiting an ancient ocean that has long since vanished.

- The ancient pigment was extracted from marine black shales of the Taoudeni Basin in Mauritania, West Africa.

21. World Population day

- July 11 was established as World Population Day in 1989 by the United Nations and since then it has been celebrated on this date every year. The United Nations recognises World Population day as an important event to spread information of population-related issues across the globe.
- *Theme for 2018:* World Population day will run on the theme “Family Planning is a Human right” this year.

Aim of World Population Day:

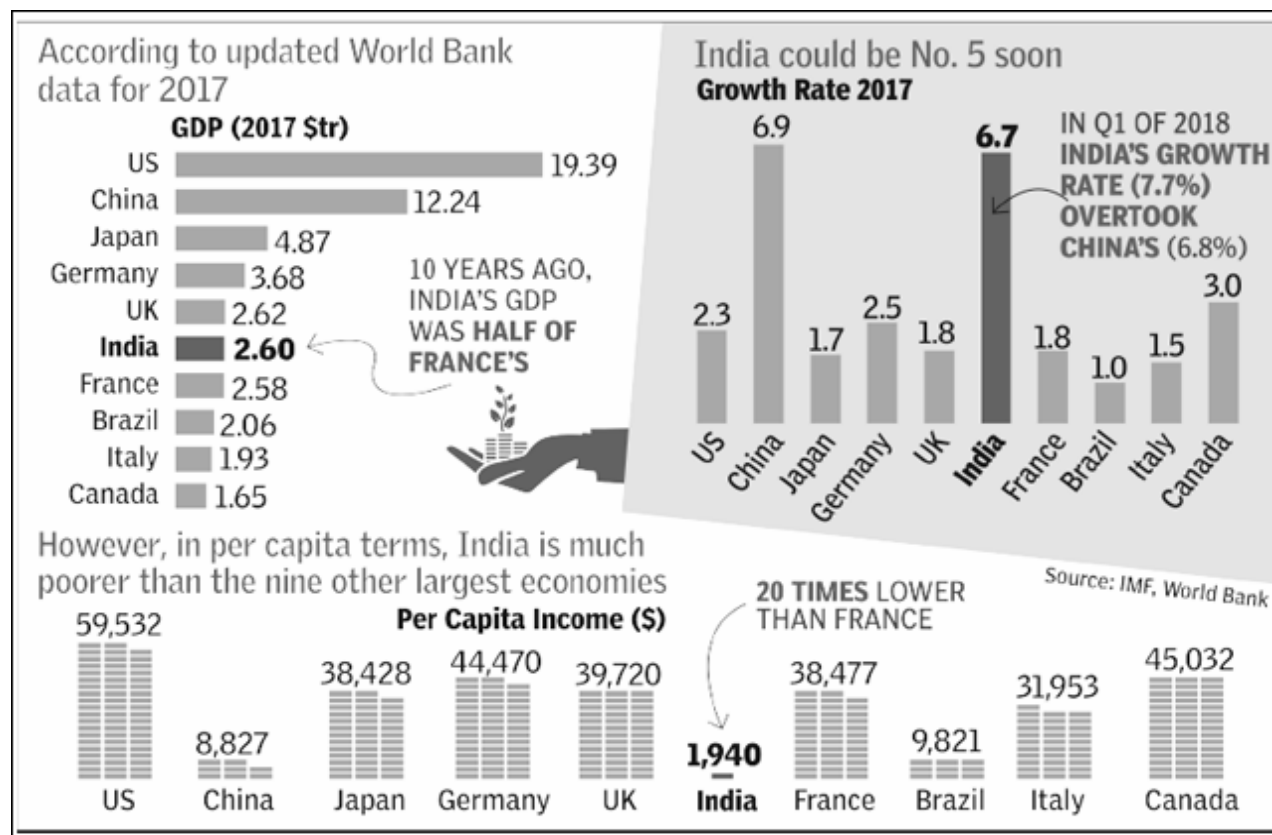
- Almost on the verge of completing three decades now, the internationally celebrated event aims to spread awareness on issues such as overpopulation, under-population and birth control.
- The world population is currently pegged at around 7 billion and according to UN reports is growing at a fast pace, adding 83 million people every year.

22. India now world's 6th largest economy

- India has now become world's sixth-largest economy, pushing past France, according to the updated World Bank figures for 2017.

Large economies:

- The US remains the world's largest economy followed by China, Japan, Germany and Britain.



23. Right of temple entry

- The Supreme Court, in its first preliminary observations on a rule barring women from entering the Sabarimala temple in Kerala due to biological reasons, has said women have the constitutional right of equal access to public places of worship to pray. Any rule that stood in their way would be against this right, the apex court said.
- Women are not allowed to enter Sabarimala temple. The discrimination is based on

physiological reason as women between the age group of 10-50 undergo menstruation.

- All Hindus have the right to enter the temple and denying them the right was a kind of "untouchability" which was abolished by Article 17 of the Constitution.
- It also goes against the spirit of Articles 14, 15 and 21.