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(16th -21st JULY 2018)



IAS MENTOR is education center for Academic & Competitive examination. IAS MENTOR offers IAS/PCS Exam preparation classes.

Mission

To bring Socio-Economic justice through most powerful weapon 'EDUCATION'

Description

IAS MENTOR is an education center founded by MR.SAHBAN ALI, Advocate, Ex. Founding Member & Director of Education360.Pvt .Ltd, one of the best teachers & mentors for CIVIL SERVICES EXAMS- I.A.S./P.C.S. & his brother SUBHAN ALI selected for I.E.S Interview (UPSC), selected in RRB as Senior Section Engineer, Selected in DDA , M.Tech (IIT Delhi), B.Tech. (Civil) JMI, New Delhi.

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***“What counts in life is not the mere fact that we have lived.
It is what difference we have made to the lives of others that
will determine the significance of the life we lead.”***

Nelson Mandela

President Nominates Four Members to Rajya Sabha

Nominated member of the Rajya Sabha:

Under article 80 of the Constitution, the Council of States (Rajya Sabha) is composed of not more than 250 members, of whom 12 are nominated by the President of India from amongst persons who have special knowledge or practical experience in respect of such matters as literature, science, art and social service.

- They *take part in the proceedings of the House* as any other member.
- They, however, *are not entitled to vote in the election of the President of India.*
- *But in the election of the Vice-President of India, they have a right to vote.*
- A *nominated member is allowed six months, should he decide to join a political party after he has taken his seat in the House in terms of article 99 of the Constitution.*
- A nominated member has also been *exempted from filing his assets and liabilities under Section 75A of the Representation of the Peoples Act, 1951* which requires the elected member to do so within 90 days of his making or subscribing oath/affirmation.
- Under MPLADS, *the Nominated Members of the Rajya Sabha may select any Districts from any State in the Country* for implementation of their choice of work under the scheme.

Direct benefit transfer (DBT)

Transfer (DBT) was started on 1st January, 2013.

JAM Trinity:

DBT by leveraging the **JAM (Jan Dhan, Aadhaar and Mobiles) trinity** and the technological prowess offers to drastically improve the benefit delivery system in the country. The JAM Trinity will enable this novel system to transfer benefits in a leakage-proof, well targeted, cashless and timely manner.

World Customs Organisation (WCO)

Context: India has become the Vice- Chair (Regional Head) of the Asia Pacific Region of World Customs Organisation (WCO) for a period of two years, from July, 2018 to June, 2020.

About WCO:

- The World Customs Organization (WCO), established in 1952 as *the Customs Cooperation Council (CCC) is an independent intergovernmental body* whose mission is to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of Customs administrations.
- Today, the WCO represents 182 Customs administrations across the globe that collectively process approximately 98% of world trade.
- As the global centre of Customs expertise,
- the WCO is the only international organization with competence in Customs matters and can rightly call itself the voice of the international Customs community.
- 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 has also been responsible for administering the World Trade Organization's Agreements on Customs Valuation, which provide a system for placing values on imported goods, and the Rules of Origin, which are used to determine the origin of a given commodity

IFFCO iMandi

What is it? It is an e-commerce platform launched by IFFCO to address all needs of the farming community associated with it. For this initiative, IFFCO has partnered with Singapore-based technology firm iMandi.

About Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO):

IFFCO is large scale fertiliser cooperative federation in India which is registered as Multistate Cooperative Society. It is one of India's biggest cooperative society which is wholly owned by Indian Cooperatives.

BrahMos missile

About BrahMos missile:

- Weighing 2.5 ton, BrahMos ALCM is *the heaviest weapon to be deployed on India's Su-30 fighter aircraft.*
- It has been modified by HAL to carry weapons.
- It is *a world-class weapon with multi-platform, multi-mission role and is capable of being launched from land, sea and air.*
- BrahMos is *a joint venture between the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) of India and NPOM of Russia.*
- The name Brahmos has been taken from *two rivers – Brahmaputra and Moskva.*

- The heavyweight missile, integrated with the long-range fighter, is seen as a force multiplier for the IAF.
- The **Brahmos cruise missiles** have an effective *strike range of around 290-300 km*. The land and warship versions have already been inducted by the armed forces.

Google teams up with UN to track environmental changes

Context: The UNEP has entered into a partnership with Google to monitor the impacts of human activity on global ecosystems by using sophisticated online tools.

Initial focus:

- Google will periodically produce geospatial maps and data on water-related ecosystems by employing massive parallel Cloud computing technology.

About UNEP:

- The **United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)** is an agency of United Nations and coordinates its environmental activities, assisting developing countries in implementing environmentally sound policies and practices.
- It was **founded by Maurice Strong**, its first director, as a result of the **United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) in June 1972** and has its headquarters in the **Gigiri neighborhood of Nairobi, Kenya**.
- UNEP has overall responsibility for environmental problems among United Nations agencies but talks on addressing global warming are overseen by the Bonn-based Secretariat of the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change**.
- Its activities cover a wide range of issues regarding the atmosphere, marine and terrestrial ecosystems, environmental governance and green economy.
- UNEP has also been active in funding and implementing environment related development projects.
- **The World Meteorological Organization and UNEP established the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988**.
- **UNEP is also one of several Implementing Agencies for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol, and it is also a member of the United Nations Development Group**.
- The **International Cyanide Management Code**, a program of best practice for the chemical's use at gold mining operations, was developed under UNEP's aegis

FASTags

What is FASTag?

- It 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

Right of temple entry

Context: In its first preliminary observations on a rule barring women from entering the Sabarimala temple in Kerala due to **biological reasons**, the Supreme Court 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.

What's the issue?

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.

Fundamental Right in question:

- Can right of women to pray at the place of their choice be discriminated against solely based **"on a biological factor (menstruation) exclusive to the female gender"**?
- 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**.

Observations made by the Court:

- In a public place of worship, a woman can enter, where a man can go. **What applies to a man, applies to a woman. Women and their physiological phenomena are creations of God. If not God, of nature.**
- Why should this (menstruation) be a reason for exclusion for employment or worship or anything?
- **Article 25 (1) mandates freedom of conscience and right to practise religion.** **"All persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practise and propagate religion"**. This means right to pray is a constitutional right. Also,
- **the Constitution upholds the ideals of liberty of thought, expression, belief and faith, be it for man or woman.** Therefore, the **discrimination is a violation of the rights to equality and gender justice.**

Make child marriages invalid

Context: The WCD Ministry has proposed to make child marriages “void ab initio” (invalid from the outset).

What’s proposed?

The ministry seeks to amend section 3 of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, under which a child marriage is only voidable at the option of the contracting parties.

Current scenario:

- Currently, *child marriages are valid in India, but can be annulled if a case is filed in a district court by either of the two contracting parties within two years of becoming an adult, or through a guardian in case of minors.*
- Also, in October 2017, the Supreme Court had ruled that “sexual intercourse with a minor wife amounts to rape, as under no circumstances can a child below 18 years give consent, express or implied, for sexual intercourse.”

Background:

- The legal age for marriage in India is 18 for a woman and 21 for a man.
- According to a study based on Census 2011, there are 2.3 crore child brides in the country. The National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 2015-16 also showed that 26.8 per cent women were married off before they turned 18.
- According to the NFHS 2015-16, nearly eight per cent girls in the 15-19 age group had already become mothers or pregnant at the time of the survey.

Way ahead:

- If approved, it will amend the provisions of the law that allow child marriages to continue till a case is filed in a district court by either of the two contracting parties within two years of becoming an adult, or through a guardian in case of minors.

Facts for Prelims:

- The West Bengal government, in June 2017, won the prestigious *UN Public Service Award* for its initiative to combat child marriage and ensure education to the girl child in the state. *West Bengal has been awarded for the ‘Kanyashree Prakalpa’ initiative that sought to reduce the high child marriage rates and low female education rates in the state.*
- Through the initiative, cash was deposited into the bank account of girls for every year they remained in school and were unmarried. This initiative led to a “drastic reduction in child marriage, increase in female education and female empowerment.”

Article 161 of the Constitution

Context: Cabinet approves Special Remission to Prisoners on the occasion of *150th Birth Anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi*.

What next?

- *Article 161 deals with Power of Governor* to grant pardons, etc, and to suspend, remit or commute sentences in certain cases. It states, *the Governor of a State shall have the power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to*

suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person convicted of any offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the State extends.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PARDONING POWERS OF PRESIDENT AND GOVERNOR:

The scope of the pardoning power of the **President** under **Article 72** is wider than the pardoning power of the **Governor** under **Article 161**. The power differs in the following two ways:

- The power of the President to grant pardon extends in cases where the punishment or sentence is by a Court Martial but Article 161 does not provide any such power to the Governor.
- The President can grant pardon in all cases where the sentence given is sentence of death but pardoning power of Governor does not extend to death sentence cases.

Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI)

About ICAI:

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) is *a statutory body* established by an Act of Parliament of India, '**The Chartered Accountants Act, 1949**', to regulate the profession of Chartered Accountancy in India.

- ICAI is *the second largest professional Accounting & Finance body in the world*.
- ICAI is the *only licensing cum regulating body* of the financial audit and accountancy profession in India.
- It *recommends the accounting standards* to be followed by companies in India to **National Advisory Committee on Accounting Standards (NACAS)**.
- ICAI is *solely responsible for setting the Standards on Auditing (SAs)* to be followed in the audit of financial statements in India.
- ICAI is *one of the founder members of the International Federation of Accountants (IFAC), South Asian Federation of Accountants (SAFA), and Confederation of Asian and Pacific Accountants (CAPA)*.

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

Context: 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.

- **What is no detention policy?**

According to this provision "no child admitted in a school shall be held back in any class". This translates into automatic promotions to the next class every year until Class VII.

BRICS Regional Aviation Partnership








Context: The Union Cabinet has approved the signing of Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) amongst BRICS Nations on the Regional Aviation Partnership Cooperation viz. **Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa**.

What is BRICS?

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The acronym “BRICs” was initially formulated in 2001 by economist Jim O’Neill, of Goldman Sachs, in his publication *Building Better Global Economic BRICs*, on growth prospects for the economies of Brazil, Russia, India and China– which together represented a significant share of the world’s production and population.

- The BRIC grouping's first formal summit, also held in Yekaterinburg, commenced on 16 June 2009
- In 2010, South Africa began efforts to join the BRIC grouping, and the process for its formal admission began in August of that year.[21]South Africa officially became a member nation on 24 December 2010
- In April 2011, the President of South Africa, Jacob Zuma, attended the 2011 BRICS summit in Sanya, China, as a full member.

Sr. No.	Date(s)	Host country	Host leader	Location	Notes
1st	16 June 2009	 Russia	Dmitry Medvedev	Yekaterinburg	
2nd	15 April 2010	 Brazil	Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva	Brasília	Guests: Jacob Zuma (President of South Africa) and Riyad al-Maliki (Foreign Minister of the Palestinian National Authority)
3rd	14 April 2011	 China	Hu Jintao	Sanya	First summit to include South Africa alongside the original BRIC countries.
4th	29 March 2012	 India	Manmohan Singh	New Delhi	The BRICS Cable announced an optical fibre submarine communications cablesystem that carries telecommunications between the BRICS countries.
5th	26–27 March 2013	 South Africa	Jacob Zuma	Durban (Durban ICC)	
6th	14–17 July 2014	 Brazil	Dilma Rousseff	Fortaleza	BRICS New Development Bank and BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement agreements signed. Guest: Leaders of Union of South American Nations (UNASUR)
7th	8–9 July 2015	 Russia	Vladimir	Ufa	Joint summit with SCO-EEU (Eurasian

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			Putin		Economic Union)
8th	15–16 October 2016	 India	Narendra Modi	Benaulim	Joint summit with BIMSTEC
9th	3–5 September 2017	 China	Xi Jinping	Xiamen	Joint summit with EMDCD (Emerging Markets and Developing Countries Dialogue)
10th	25-27 July 2018	 South Africa	Cyril Ramaphosa	Johannesburg	
11th	TBD 2019	 Brazil	-		
12th	TBD 2020	 Russia	Vladimir Putin	Chelyabinsk	Joint summit with SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation)

State Banks (Repeal and Amendment) Bill, 2017

Context: 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.

Background:

- The Union Cabinet in February 2017 had approved merger of five associate banks along with Bharatiya Mahila Bank with SBI.
- The merger had made SBI one of 50 biggest banks of world.

Cabinet relaxes NELP, pre-NELP pact rules

Context: The Union Cabinet approved the policy framework to streamline production sharing contracts signed in the pre-New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) and NELP periods.

- **Key decisions under the framework** include increasing the exploration period granted for blocks in the northeast, and easing the sharing of royalties with the developers of the blocks.

New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP):

- New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) was conceptualized by the Government of India, during 1997-98 to provide an equal platform to both Public and Private sector companies in exploration and production of hydrocarbons.
- It provided for establishment of **Directorate General of Hydrocarbons (DGH)** as a nodal agency for its implementation.
- It was introduced to boost the production of oil and natural gas and providing level playing field for both public and private players.
- Before implementation of the New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP) in 1999, a mere 11% of Indian sedimentary basins were under exploration, which has now increased extensively over the years.

About Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP):

- Government of India launched a new policy regime for Exploration & Production (E&P) sector namely Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) in 2016 which is **paradigm shift from earlier policy regime**.
- **The main features of new Policy regime** are Revenue Sharing Contract, single Licence for exploration and production of conventional as well as unconventional Hydrocarbon resources, marketing & pricing freedom, etc.
- **Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP)** under HELP, is main innovative feature wherein investor can carve out Blocks of their own interest and submit an **Expression of Interest (EoI)** throughout the year. Based on the areas for which expression of interest has been expressed bidding will be conducted every 6 months.

All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE):

Why in News? Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved renewal of appointment of Prof Anil D Sahasrabudhe as the chairman of the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) till he attains the age of 65 years.

- AICTE: **AICTE is a statutory body established in November 1945.**
- It comes under the aegis of Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resources Development.
- It is a national-level council for technical education responsible for planning and coordination of technical education and management of education system in the country. It accredits graduate and post graduate programs at Indian institutions.

Nelson Mandela International Day

Context: *Nelson Mandela International Day 2018 marks 100 years since the birth of Nelson Mandela (18 July 1918).*

- *What is Nelson Mandela International Day?* Nelson Mandela International Day is a global event held annually to honor former South African president and anti-apartheid activist Nelson Mandela.
- The day was officially declared by the United Nations in November 2009, with the first UN Mandela Day held on 18 July 2010. However, other groups began celebrating Mandela Day on 18 July 2009.
- On 27 April 2009, the 46664 (a series of AIDS benefit concerts played in honour of Nelson Mandela by South African and foreign musicians between 2003 and 2008.) concerts and the Nelson Mandela Foundation invited the global community to join them in support of an official Mandela Day.
- *Mandela Day is a global call to action that celebrates the idea that each individual has the power to transform the world, the ability to make an impact.*
- *The first Mandela Day was held on Mandela's 91st birthday on July 18, 2009 to Who was Nelson Mandela?*
- Nelson Mandela was the former President of South Africa as well as an *antiapartheid activist*, philanthropist and political leader. *For his efforts promoting social justice, democracy and peace, he was awarded dozens of prestigious accolades, including the Nobel Peace Prize and the U.S. Presidential Medal of Freedom.*

Newest phase in Earth's history named after Meghalaya rock

Context: 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.

Its official:

International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) has officially accepted the new phase. Besides, *two other ages — the Middle Holocene Northgrippian Age and the Early Holocene Greenlandian Age* — with beginnings defined at climatic events that happened about 8,300 years and 11,700 years ago, respectively, were also approved by the International Commission on Stratigraphy, which is responsible for standardising the geologic time scale.

About International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS):

- The IUGS is an *international non-governmental organization* devoted to international cooperation in the field of geology. It is a Scientific Union member of the

International Council for Science (ICSU), which it recognizes as the coordinating body for the international organization of science.

- IUGS promotes and encourages the study of geological problems, especially those of worldwide significance, and supports and facilitates international and interdisciplinary cooperation in the earth sciences.
- *IUGS is a joint partner with UNESCO for the International Geoscience Programme (IGCP) and they also participate in the Global Network of National Geoparks (GGN).*

Samagra Shiksha Scheme

Context: 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’*.

About ‘Padhe Bharat- Badhe Bharat’:

- 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.

About Samagra Shiksha scheme:

- *‘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.

Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill

Context: The Lok Sabha has passed the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, which *aims to deter fugitive economic offenders from evading the legal process by fleeing the country and remaining outside the jurisdiction of Indian courts.*

Highlights of the Bill:

- The Bill will give *the right to the government to confiscate the property* of such economic offenders in India and abroad. The Bill will also be applicable on the proxy owned properties of the economic offenders.
- The Bill *defines the economic offenders* as those against whom a legal warrant has been issued, but they refuse to adhere to the summons of the legal authorities.
- The *law balances itself with a provision that allows the accused to file an appeal* in the High Court to state their case.

- The Bill *keeps the banks and other financial institutions at the Centre* and seeks to help them recover the amount. The Bill will only be used for economic offences over Rs 100 crores.
- The Bill *makes provisions for a Court* ('Special Court' under the Prevention of Money-laundering Act, 2002) to declare a person as a Fugitive Economic Offender.

Who is a fugitive economic offender?

A Fugitive Economic Offender is a person who has an arrest warrant issued in respect of a scheduled offence and who leaves or has left India so as to avoid criminal prosecution, or refuses to return to India to face criminal prosecution.

Ganga Vriksharopan Abhiyan

Context: 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.

About Ganga Vriksharopan Abhiyan:

- 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.

Forest Interventions in Ganga (FIG):

- The afforestation is part of the Forest Interventions in Ganga (FIG) which is significant as it aims to bring greater awareness among people and other stakeholders regarding the importance of afforestation for the task of Ganga Rejuvenation.

About NMCG:

- **The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) is the implementation wing of National Ganga Council which was set up in October 2016 under the River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities order 2016.**
- *The order dissolved National Ganga River Basin Authority.*
- *NMCG has a two tier management structure* and comprises of **Governing Council and Executive Committee**. Both of them are headed by **Director General**, NMCG. Executive Committee has been authorized to accord approval for all projects up to Rs.1000 crore.

The order envisages five tier structure at national, state and district level to take measures for prevention, control and abatement of environmental pollution in river Ganga and to ensure continuous adequate flow of water so as to rejuvenate the river Ganga as below:

- National Ganga Council under chairmanship of Hon'ble Prime Minister of India.
- Empowered Task Force (ETF) on river Ganga under chairmanship of Hon'ble Union Minister of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation. National Mission for Clean Ganga(NMCG).State Ganga Committees. District Ganga

Committees in every specified district abutting river Ganga and its tributaries in the states.

Rani-ki-Vav

Why in News? The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) will soon be releasing a new lavender Rs 100 currency note. The banknote highlights the rich and diverse cultural heritage of India as it prominently displays a photograph of 'Rani-ki-vav' (The Queen's Stepwell), an 11th century architectural wonder.

About 'Rani-ki-vav':

- Located in Gujarat's Patan, the 900-year-old structure is a major tourist attraction,
- A UNESCO World Heritage site, and was awarded as the cleanest iconic place in India in 2016.
- It is located on the banks of Saraswati River.

Who built it? I

- It was built by the Solanki dynasty's queen Udayamati in the 11th century as a memorial to her deceased husband Bhimdev I.

Architectural significance:

- Rani-ki-Vav was built in the complex Maru-Gurjara architectural style.
- It highlights the sanctity of water as it is designed as an inverted temple under the earth's surface.
- The central theme is the Dasavataras, or ten incarnations of Vishnu, including Buddha. The avatars are accompanied by sadhus, brahmins, and apsaras (celestial dancers).

Israel Adopts Jewish Nation-State Law

Context: Israel's parliament has adopted a law defining the country as the nation state of the Jewish people, provoking fears it could lead to blatant discrimination against Arab citizens.

The Nationality Bill:

- The law speaks of Israel as the historic homeland of the Jews and says they have a "unique" right to self-determination there.
- The legislation makes Hebrew the country's national language and defines the establishment of Jewish communities as being in the national interest.
- Arabic, previously considered an official language, was granted only special status.
- It also establishes the flag, the national symbol and anthem
- The legislation becomes part of the country's basic laws, which serve as a de facto constitution.

Concerns:

- Critics say the law is "racist" and it legalises "apartheid". The passage of the law continues Israel's rightward shift in recent years amid frustration with failed peace

agreements with the Palestinians and steady growth in settlement building in the occupied West Bank.

- **Arab Muslims are also concerned.** Israel is currently home to 1.8 million Arab Muslims, roughly 20 percent of its population, who have lived here since the creation of the independent nation state. They speak and study in the language most widely spoken across the region, by Muslims, Christians and Jews alike.

Facts for Prelims:

Israel has no constitution but instead passed over time a series of Basic Laws which have constitutional status. The nation state law is the 14th such basic law.

Global Slavery Index 2018

Context: The report of the Global slavery Index 2018 has been released. *It is published by the Australia-based human rights group Walk Free Foundation.*

What is Modern Slavery?

“In the context of this report, modern slavery covers a set of specific legal concepts including forced labour, debt bondage, forced marriage, slavery and slavery-like practices, and human trafficking”.

It is used as an umbrella term which refers to situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and abuse of power.

Performance of various countries:

- North Korea is at the top of the list with 104.6 per 1,000 and Japan registering the lowest prevalence rate of 0.3 per 1,000.
- Globally, nearly three-quarters (71 percent) of modern slavery’s victims are women and girls. There are more female than male victims across all forms of modern slavery.
- The 10 countries with the largest number of absolute numbers of people in modern slavery include India, China, Pakistan, North Korea, Nigeria, Iran, Indonesia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Russia and the Philippines.

Extent of modern slavery in India:

- Among 167 countries, India ranked 53. However, in absolute numbers, India topped the list on prevalence.
- The index estimates that on any given day in 2016 there were nearly 8 million people living in “modern slavery” in India — a claim strongly contested by the government on the grounds that its parameters were poorly defined and too wide-ranging.

Delhi Dialogue

Context: *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, that was held in New Delhi in January 2018.

Theme: *“Strengthening India-ASEAN Maritime Cooperation”.*

What is Delhi Dialogue?

- It is a premier annual track 1.5 event to discuss politico-security, economic and sociocultural 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.

ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations):

- The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand.
- It was established with the signing of an ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the ministers of the founding countries.
- Its founding countries are Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Eventually, Brunei Darussalam then joined on 7 January 1984, Viet Nam on 28 July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999, making up to ten Member States of ASEAN.

India’s active participation in the region:

- India’s focus on a strengthened and multi-faceted relationship with ASEAN.
- Apart from ASEAN, India has taken other policy initiatives in the region that involve some members of ASEAN like BIMSTEC, MGC etc.
- India is also an active participant in several regional forums like the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), East Asia Summit (EAS), ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting + (ADMM+) and Expanded ASEAN Maritime Forum (EAMF).

Significance of India-ASEAN relations for India:

- ASEAN is our fourth largest trading partner and India is their seventh largest trading partner.
- The South-East Asian region is economically very vibrant; this is a vibrant economic commercial space for India.
- India’s investment in the last two decades has been \$70 billion. So, there is a lot of potential in engaging them further.
- Many countries in the region have people of Indian origin among their citizens—most notably Malaysia and Singapore.

Facts for Prelims:

- The theme of ninth edition of dialogue was “**ASEAN-India Relations: Charting the Course for the Next 25 Years**”. It had marked the 25th anniversary of ASEAN-India Partnership.
- The term track 1.5 diplomacy is used by some analysts to define a situation where official and non-official actors cooperate in conflict resolution.

Solar parks in India

Context: Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh and Rajasthan have topped the list of states with maximum solar power generation capacity approved under solar parks in India.

Solar Park Scheme:

- Ministry of New and renewable Energy (MNRE) has drawn a scheme to set up number of solar parks across various states in the country, each with a capacity of Solar Projects generally above 500 MW.
- **The Scheme proposes to provide financial support** by Government of India to establish solar parks, these solar parks will be developed in collaboration with the State Governments.
- **The implementation agency would be Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI)** on behalf of Government of India (GOI). The states shall designate a nodal agency for implementation of the solar park.

What is a solar park?

- A solar park is a concentrated zone of development of solar power generation projects and provides developers an area that is well characterized, with proper infrastructure and access to amenities and where the risk of the projects can be minimized.

India to expand polar research to Arctic

Context: Three decades after its first mission to Antarctica, the government is refocusing priorities to the other pole — the Arctic—because of opportunities and challenges posed by climate change.

Efforts in this regard:

The government has **renamed the National Centre for Antarctic and Ocean Research (NCAOR)** — since 1998, charged with conducting expeditions to India’s base stations to the continent — as **the National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research**.

- India only has one Arctic observation station near Norway.

What made India refocus its priorities?

- Climate change was a decisive factor in India re-thinking priorities. Sea ice at the Arctic has been melting rapidly — the fastest in this century. That means several spots, rich in hydrocarbon reserves, will be more accessible through the year via alternative shipping routes.

Facts for Prelims:

- India is already an observer at the Arctic Council — a forum of countries that decides on managing the region's resources and popular livelihood.
- In 2015, set up an underground observatory, called IndARC, at the Kongsfjorden fjord, half way between Norway and the North Pole.

National Database of Arms Licenses system

Context: Union Home Ministry is planning to create *National Database of Arms Licenses system from April 2019*. The decision has been taken by exercising powers under **Section 44 of the Arms Act, 1959 (54 of 1959)** by amending the Arms Rules, 2016. These rules will be called the *Arms (Second Amendment) Rules, 2018*.

About the National Database of Arms Licenses system:

- All the arms licence holders, new or old, will be included in a national database of arms licenses system and they will be issued a **unique identification number (UIN)** as well.
- Every licensing and renewing authority will have to enter the data in the National Database of Arms Licenses system, which will generate a UIN, and with effect from April 1, 2019,
- **Any Arms Licence Without UIN Shall Be Considered Invalid.**
- Additionally, any existing licensee holding multiple licenses – under Form III – shall on or before April 1 make an application for grant of a **single license in respect of all firearms held by him or her under his or her UIN to the concerned licensing authority.**
- **Separate licence books** will be generated in case of each licence, **separately for restricted and permissible categories of arms and ammunition** with an **overall ceiling of three firearms under a single UIN.**

Background:

- **Under Section 3 of the Arms Act**, it is essential to obtain an arms possession licence issued by a competent licensing authority, by any person for acquisition, possession or carrying any firearms or ammunition.

U.N. agrees first-ever global compact for migration

Context: United Nations for **first time has finalized Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration** to better manage international migration, address its challenges, strengthen migrant rights and contribute to sustainable development. The agreement will be formally adopted by **world leaders in Morocco in December 2018.**

Key facts:

- The compact is the **first intergovernmental agreement to cover wide-ranging dimensions of international migration** in holistic and comprehensive manner, agreed upon by all the UN member states **minus the United States.**

- It sets out **23 objectives** to deal issues ranging from factors that compel people to move, legal channels for migration, combating trafficking and smuggling, harnessing the economic benefits of migration and return of the migrants.

- **It is not legally binding.**

Need for a global compact:

- Over **250 million migrants worldwide account for 3% of the world's entire population, but contribute 10% of the global gross domestic production (GDP).** Migrants remittance is huge contributor to their home countries' development.

Facts for Prelims:

- The GCM is meant to be consistent with **target 10.7 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** – in which Member States committed to cooperate internationally to facilitate orderly, safe and responsible migration.

IIT-Madras unveils world's first remotely operable LEAP microscope

Context: The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT)-Madras has commissioned remotely operable Local Electrode Atom Probe (LEAP) microscope.

- **It is claimed to be world's first remotely operable LEAP microscope,** as it can be remotely operated through special terminal by researchers divided geographically.

About LEAP microscope:

- **LEAP is high-performance microscope that can provide a precise atom-by-atom view of materials.**
- It provides atomic-scale insights into metallic, which will influence wide spectrum of industries ranging from steel to automobiles and energy to transportation sector.
- It will also give major thrust to research in nanotechnology, among other fields

Who developed it?

- The remotely operable LEAP microscope has been developed in a collaborative exercise involving eight top research institutions in country, spearheaded by **IIT-M. Other partner institutions are IITs of Bombay, Delhi, Kanpur, Kharagpur and Ropar, International Advanced Research Centre for Powder Metallurgy and New Materials (ARCI) and Board of Research in Nuclear Sciences (BRNS).**

Potential applications:

- **Local Electrode Atom Probe (LEAP)** allows the user to extract atoms from materials sequentially and are detected using a Time of Flight Mass spectrometer.
- This facility will be able to provide atomic-scale insights into metallic materials thereby impacting a wide spectrum of industries ranging from steel to automobiles and energy to transportation sector.

PETCOKE

Context: The Petroleum Ministry has told the Supreme Court that it is in favour of a ban on the import of petroleum coke. However, the environment ministry is yet to take the final call and will consult with all stakeholders before arriving upon a decision.

What is petcoke?

- Petroleum coke, the bottom-of-the-barrel leftover from refining Canadian tar sands crude and other heavy oils, is cheaper and burns hotter than coal. But it also contains more planet-warming carbon and far more heart- and lung-damaging sulphur.

Concerns:

- It contains 17 times more sulfur than the limit set for coal, and a staggering 1,380 times more than for diesel.

Need for regulation: *The country has seen a dramatic increase in sulfur dioxide and nitrogen dioxide emissions in recent years*, concentrated in areas where power plants and steel factories are clustered.

- Those pollutants are converted into microscopic particles that lodge deep in the lungs and enter the **bloodstream, causing breathing and heart problems**.
- Critics say Petcoke is making a bad situation worse across India. *About 1.1 million Indians die prematurely as a result of outdoor air pollution every year*, according to the Health Effects Institute, a nonprofit funded by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and industry.

Committee Set Up To Synergise NCC And NSS

Context: Government has decided to set up *a committee under the Chairmanship of Shri Anil Swarup* to suggest measures to strengthen **National Cadet Corps (NCC) and National Service Scheme (NSS)**.

- The Committee will deal with on issues like expansion, strengthening training infrastructure, rationalizing resources, reducing manpower deficiency affecting NCC and NSS. The Committee will also submit recommend for building synergies between these two institutions viz. NCC and NSS and further strengthen them for empowering the youth.

About National Service Scheme (NSS):

What is it?

- **NSS is a Centrally Sector Scheme.** The Scheme was launched in the year 1969 with the primary objective of developing the personality and character of the student youth through voluntary community service.
- The ideological orientation of the NSS is inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. Very appropriately, the motto of NSS is **“NOT ME, BUT YOU”**.

Programme Structure:

- NSS is being implemented in Senior Secondary Schools, Colleges and Universities. The design of the NSS envisages that each educational institution covered under the Scheme has at least one NSS unit comprising of normally 100 student volunteers, led

by a **teacher designated as Programme Officer (PO)**. Each NSS unit adopts a village or slum for taking up its activities.

Nature of Activities under NSS:

- Briefly, the NSS volunteers work on issues of social relevance, which keep evolving in response to the needs of the community, through regular and special camping activities. Such issues include **i) literacy and education, (ii) health, family welfare and nutrition, (iii) environment conservation, (iv) social service programmes, (v) programmes for empowerment of women, (vi) programmes connected with economic development activities, (vii) rescue and relief during calamities, etc.**

What is National Cadet Corps?

- **The National Cadet Corps (NCC) is a youth development movement. It came into existence under the National Cadet Corps Act XXXI of 1948.**
- It **is a Tri-Services Organization**, comprising the Army, Navy and Air Force, engaged in grooming the youth of the country into disciplined and patriotic citizens.

Counter-drone strategy for airports ready

Context: Aviation security watchdog BCAS has finalised a strategy to neutralise drones near airports, with the government set to unveil a framework to regulate unmanned aircraft systems in the country. The strategy deals with drones operating near aerodromes.

What's proposed?

- A **"soft kill" approach** instead of **a hard kill approach** has been suggested because destroying a drone with a payload of explosives or biochemical will result in an attack and serve the purpose of their handlers. The best approach is to entrap the drones and not destroy them.

Background:

- **The Ministry of Civil Aviation had released draft rules for unmanned aircraft systems in November last year and proposed to ban their operation within 5 km radius of an airport and 50 km from an international border.**

About BCAS (Bureau of Civil Aviation Security):

- The Bureau of Civil Aviation Security is an **attached office of the Ministry of Civil Aviation of India**. It is the regulatory authority for civil aviation security in India.
- It is headed by an officer of the **rank of Director General of Police** and is designated as **Commissioner of Security (Civil Aviation)**.
- Commissioner of security (CA) is the appropriate authority for implementation of Annexure 17 to Chicago convention of **International civil aviation organization (ICAO)**.
- Commissioner of security (CA) is responsible for the development, implementation and maintenance of the National Civil Aviation Security Programme.
- The main responsibility of BCAS are laying down standards and measures in respect of security of civil flights at International and domestic airports in India.

Khangchendzonga National Park

- Khangchendzonga National Park also Kanchenjunga Biosphere Reserve is a National Park and a Biosphere reserve located in Sikkim, India.
- **It was inscribed to the UNESCO World Heritage Sites list on July 17, 2016, becoming the first "Mixed Heritage" site of India.**
- The park gets its name from the mountain Kangchenjunga (alternative spelling Khangchendzonga) which is 8,586 metres (28,169 ft) tall, the **third-highest peak in the world. The total area of this park is 849.5 km² (328.0 sq mi).**
- There are many **glaciers in the park** including the **Zemu glacier**.
- Animals like **musk deer, snow leopard, Clouded Leopard** and **Himalayan tahr** all make their home in this park.

Chandipur, Odisha

- Chandipur, also known as Chandipur-on-sea is a small sea resort in **Baleswar District, Odisha, India.**
- The resort is on the Bay of Bengal and is approximately 16 kilometers from the Baleswar Railway Station.
- **The beach is unique in that the water recedes up to 5 kilometers during the ebb tide. Due to its unique circumstances, the beach supports bio-diversity.**
- Chandipur-on-sea is also the location of the Ministry of Defence's Integrated Test Range (ITR), at Abdul Kalam Island, formerly Wheeler Island. **A number of missiles have been launched from the ITR including the nuclear-capable Akash, Shaurya, Agni and Prithvi, ballistic missiles, just recently being Barak 8**
- Chandipur is a unique beach because it may not be there when you visit because of high tide.



खोल दे पंख मेरे, कहता है परिंदा, अभी और उड़ान बाकी है,
जमीं नहीं है मंजिल मेरी, अभी पूरा आसमान बाकी है,
लहरों की खामोशी को समंदर की बेबसी मत समझ ऐ नादाँ,
जितनी गहराई अन्दर है, बाहर उतना तूफान बाकी है...

