

ACUMEN IAS 

CATALYST

MAY 2019

NATIONAL REGISTER OF CITIZENS

The official record of those who are legal Indian citizens

BELL OF FAITH

Project under Kerala's Community Policing Scheme.

GOLDEN VISA

For those who graduating with flying colours

ARCTIC COUNCIL

A high-level intergovernmental forum

BLACK FUNGUS

A New threat to our healthcare?



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HISTORY, ART AND CULTURE

Maharana Pratap (1540 - 1597)

- Battle of Haldighati (1576) was fought between Maharana and the forces of Akbar led by Man Singh of Amber.
- Maharana re-gathered his forces, fought and won against the Mughals after six years in 1582.
- Rana Pratap's methods of sporadic warfare was later elaborated further by Malik Ambar, the Deccani general, and by Shivaji Maharaj.

Mongolian Kanjur Manuscripts

- The Culture Ministry has informed the reprinting of about 100 sets of sacred Mongolian.
- In the Mongolian language 'Kanjur' means 'Concise Orders'- the words of Lord Buddha in particular.
- It is held in high esteem by Mongolian Buddhists and they worship the Kanjur at temples and recite the lines of Kanjur in daily life as a sacred ritual.

Basava Jayanti

- Lord Basavanna was the 12th-century poet-philosopher, and the founding saint of the Lingayat faith.
- Basavanna was a philosopher, statesman, Kannada poet and a social reformer during the reign of the Kalachuri-dynasty king Bijjala I in Karnataka.
- Basavanna spread social awareness through his poetry, popularly known as Vachanas.
- Basavanna rejected gender or social discrimination, superstitions and rituals.
- He introduced new public institutions such as the Anubhava Mantapa (hall of spiritual experience)
- As a leader, he developed and inspired a new devotional movement named Virashaivas
- This movement shared its roots in the ongoing Tamil Bhakti movement, particularly the Shaiva Nayanars traditions, over the 7th- to 11th-century.
- It rejected temple worship and rituals led by Brahmins, and replaced it with personalized direct worship of Shiva through practices such

- The egalitarianism of Basavanna's Sharana movement was too radical for its times.

UNESCO world heritage sites

- Six sites have been added to India's tentative list of UNESCO world heritage sites namely Maratha military architecture in Maharashtra, Hire Benkal megalithic site in Karnataka, Bhedaghat-Lametaghat of Narmada Valley in Madhya Pradesh, Ganga ghats in Varanasi, temples of Kancheepuram, Satpura Tiger Reserve in Madhya Pradesh.

The Reclining Buddha

- On Buddha Jayanti (May 26), India's largest statue of the Reclining Buddha was to have been installed at the Buddha International Welfare Mission temple in Bodh Gaya.
- A reclining Buddha statue or image represents the Buddha during his last illness, about to enter Parinirvana.
- The Reclining Buddha was first depicted in Gandhara art
- Statues and images of the Reclining Buddha show him lying on his right side, his head resting on a cushion or on his right elbow.
- At the Mahabodhi temple, the Buddha is sitting in the bhoomi-sparsha mudra. It symbolises earth as being witness to his enlightenment.
- At Sarnath, where the Buddha gave his first sermon, the stone statue has a hand gesture called the dharma-chakra mudra, which signifies preaching.
- The Walking Buddha is either beginning his journey toward enlightenment or returning after giving a sermon.

Gopal Krishna Gokhale

- He served as Secretary of the Deccan Education Society.
- Gokhale also published a daily newspaper entitled Jnanaprakash, which allowed him to voice his reformist views on politics and society.
- He was later to the Council of India of the Governor-General of India in 1903.
- In 1905, he founded the Servants of India Society, which trained people to be selfless workers

- Gokhale was a mentor to both Mohammed Jinnah and Mahatma Gandhi. Mahatma Gandhi even wrote a book called, 'Gokhale, My Political Guru'.

Veer Savarkar

- He was against foreign goods and propagated the idea of Swadeshi.
- He championed atheism and rationality and also disapproved orthodox Hindu belief.
- Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar also compared his work to Lord Buddha.
- Savarkar was a president of Hindu Mahasabha from 1937 to 1943.
- When congress ministries offered resignation on 22nd oct 1939, Hindu mahaasabha under his leadership cooperated with Muslim league to form government in provinces like Sindh, Bengal and NWFP.
- In Pune, Savarkar founded the Abhinav Bharat Society.
- He was also involved in the Swadeshi movement and later joined Tilak's Swaraj Party.

Kachin people

- They are a confederation of ethnic groups who inhabit the Kachin Hills in northern Myanmar's Kachin State and neighbouring Yunnan Province, China, and Arunachal Pradesh, Assam in Northeastern India.
- The term Kachin people is often used interchangeably with the main subset, called the Jingpo people in China.

Moorhen Yoga Mat

- It is a biodegradable and compostable yoga mat developed from water hyacinth by six young girls from the fishing community in Assam.
- The intervention was triggered through an initiative by North East Centre for Technology Application and Reach (NECTAR), an autonomous body under Department of Science & Technology (DST), Govt. of India to involve the entire women community associated with a collective called 'Simang' meaning dream, to create wealth from water hyacinth plants.

Miniature sculpture of the Buddha

- The Buddha was found among debris removed

from an abandoned well at Alembi in Udupi

- The Buddha is seated on a lotus pedestal in Dharma Chakra Pravarthana Mudra.
- Below the seat, six disciples are seated on either side of the Dharma Chakra.
- The Lord wears clothes and ear-rings. A small Ushnisha is shown on the top of the head. In the back of the head, a beautifully carved round lobe is seen.
- On the top corners, two Yakshas and, on either side of his back, two winged horses have been carved out. The sculpture is in the Gupta style.



WOMEN IAS

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Section 304-B

- The Supreme Court has called dowry harassment a “pestiferous” crime where women are subjected to cruelty by “covetous” husbands and in-laws.
- According to Section 304-B, to make out a case of dowry death, a woman should have died of burns or other bodily injuries or otherwise than under normal circumstances within seven years of her marriage.
- Dowry deaths accounted for 40% to 50% homicides in the country for almost a decade from 1999 to 2018.

Malthusian theory

- Thomas Robert Malthus was the first economist to propose a systematic theory of population.
- He argued that if left unchecked, a population will outgrow its resources, leading to a many of problems like gender imbalance

Article 164 (3)

- The Article 164 (3) of the Constitution states that before a Minister enters upon his office, the Governor shall administer to him the oaths of office and of secrecy according to the forms set out for the purpose in the Third Schedule.
- There is no ban on an online event as the Constitution does not insist on a physical mode.

Article 311

- Article 311(1) says that a civil servant cannot be dismissed or removed by any authority subordinate to the authority by which he was appointed.
- Article 311(2) says that a civil servant cannot be removed or dismissed or reduced in rank unless he has been given a reasonable opportunity to show cause against action proposed to be taken against him.

Define offences of speech

- As there is no clear definition of what constitutes a hate speech in the Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Committee for Reforms in Criminal Laws is attempting for the first time to define such speech.
- The Bureau of Police Research and

Development recently published a manual for investigating agencies on cyber harassment cases that defined hate speech as a language that denigrates, insults, threatens or targets an individual based on their identity and other traits (such as sexual orientation or disability or religion etc.).

- Committee for Reforms in Criminal Laws
- The committee has decided that instead of ad hoc changes, all the pending issues such as those on hate speech as recommended by the Viswanathan committee can be examined and comprehensive changes are brought in.

CEC moves Supreme Court

- CEC urged the court to direct the police not to register cases for murder against Election Commission officials or take any coercive action on the basis of media reports on verbal observations attributed to the High Court judges.
- Article 136 / Special leave to appeal by the Supreme Court: The Supreme Court may, in its discretion, grant special leave to appeal from any judgment, decree, determination, sentence or order in any cause or matter passed or made by any court or tribunal in the territory of India.

Article 254(1)

- If any provision of a law made by the Legislature of a State is repugnant to any provision of a law made by Parliament which Parliament is competent to enact, or to any provision of an existing law with respect to one of the matters enumerated in the Concurrent List, then, subject to the provisions of clause (2), the law made by Parliament, whether passed before or after the law made by the Legislature of such State, or, as the case may be, the existing law, shall prevail and the law made by the Legislature of the State shall, to the extent of the repugnancy, be void.

PM-CARES

- The Prime Minister’s Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations (PM-CARES) Fund was set up to accept donations and provide relief during the Covid-19 pandemic,

and other similar emergencies.

- Prime Minister is the ex-officio Chairman of the PM CARES Fund and Minister of Defence, Minister of Home Affairs and Minister of Finance, Government of India are ex-officio Trustees of the Fund.

CBI Director

- The Director of the CBI is appointed as per section 4A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act of 1946.
- The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act (2013) says that the Central Government shall appoint the Director of CBI on the recommendation of a three-member committee consisting of the Prime Minister as Chairperson, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Chief Justice of India or Judge of the Supreme Court nominated by him.
- The Delhi Special Police Establishment (Amendment) Act, 2014 made a change in the composition of the committee related to the appointment of the Director of C.B.I. It states that where there is no recognized leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha, then the leader of the single largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha would be a member of that committee.

Anticipatory bail

- HCs and SC are given powers to grant anticipatory bail to the accused because of the premium that the Constitution places on the right to liberty guaranteed under Article 21.
- The grant or rejection of an application under CrPC has a direct bearing on the right to life and liberty of an individual. Therefore, the provision needs to be read liberally, and considering its beneficial nature.
- The provision of anticipatory bail under Section 438 was introduced when CrPC was amended in 1973.
- The Supreme Court (SC) in Sushila Aggarwal v. State of NCT of Delhi (2020) case delivered a significant verdict, ruling that no time limit can be set while granting anticipatory Bail and it can continue even until the end of the trial.
- It is issued only by the Sessions Court and High Court.

Legislative Council

- Under Article 169 of the constitution, Parliament may by law create or abolish the second chamber in a state if the Legislative Assembly of that state passes a resolution to that effect by a special majority.
- As per article 171 clause (1) of the Indian Constitution, the total number of members in the legislative council of a state shall not exceed one third of the total number of the members in the legislative Assembly of that state and the total number of members in the legislative council of a state shall in no case be less than 40.
 - 1/3rd of members are elected by members of the Assembly.
 - 1/3rd by electorates consisting of members of municipalities, district boards and other local authorities in the state
 - 1/12th by an electorate consisting of teachers
 - 1/12th by registered graduates
 - The remaining members are nominated by the Governor from among those who have distinguished themselves in literature, science, art, the cooperative movement, and social service.

MPLADS

- The Union government had resorted to Disaster Management Act to suspend the member of Parliament local area development (MPLAD) scheme in April 2020.
- It was launched in 1993 to provide a mechanism for the Members of Parliament to recommend works of developmental nature for creation of durable community assets and for provision of basic facilities including community infrastructure, based on locally felt needs.
- The annual MPLADS fund entitlement per MP constituency is Rs. 5 crore.
- MPs are to recommend every year, works costing at least 15 per cent of the MPLADS entitlement for the year for areas inhabited by Scheduled Caste population and 7.5 per cent for areas inhabited by S.T. population.
- Funds are released in the form of grants in-aid directly to the district authorities.
- The funds released under the scheme are non-

lapsable.

- The liability of funds not released in a particular year is carried forward to the subsequent years, subject to eligibility.
- The MPs have a recommendatory role under the scheme. The district authority is empowered to examine the eligibility of works, sanction funds and select the implementing agencies, prioritise works, supervise overall execution, and monitor the scheme at the ground level.
- At least 10% of the projects under implementation in the district are to be inspected every year by the district authority.
- The Lok Sabha Members can recommend works in their respective constituencies.
- The elected members of the Rajya Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the state from which they are elected. Nominated members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha may select works for implementation anywhere in the country.

Returning officer has final say in recount of votes

- When an application for recounting of votes is made the returning officer shall decide the matter and may allow the application in whole or in part or may reject it in its entirety if it appears to him to be frivolous or unreasonable. Only legal remedy is to file an EP (election petition) before the high court.
- As per provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, the decision of a returning officer can only be challenged through an election petition under section 80 of the Act.
- Scheme of Financial Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure
- The Ministry of Finance, Government of India has decided to provide an additional amount of upto ₹15,000 crore to States as interest free 50 year loan for spending on capital projects.
- The Department of Expenditure has issued fresh guidelines in this regard on the "Scheme of Financial Assistance to States for Capital Expenditure" for the financial year 2021-22.
- The first part of scheme is for North-east and hill states and an amount of ₹2,600 crore has

been earmarked.

- The second part of scheme is for all other states with an amount of ₹7,400 crore.
- The third part of scheme is for providing incentives to states for monetisation or recycling of infrastructure assets and disinvestment of state public sector enterprises. An amount of ₹5,000 crore is allocated.

FCRA amendments

- The amendments to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA) enacted in 2020 made it compulsory for NGOs to open a bank account in Delhi.
- It seeks to prohibit 'public servants' from receiving any foreign funding.
- It proposes to reduce the use of foreign funds to meet administrative costs by NGOs from the existing 50 per cent to 20 per cent.
- It seeks to prohibit any transfer of foreign contribution to any association/person.
- It proposes to make Aadhaar cards a mandatory identification document for all office-bearers, directors and other key functionaries of NGOs or associations eligible to receive foreign donations.

National Register of Citizens (NRC)

- The NRC is an official record of those who are legal Indian citizens.
- It includes demographic information about all those individuals who qualify as citizens of India as per the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- The register was first prepared after the 1951 Census of India and since then it has not been updated until recently.
- In 2014, the SC ordered the updation of the NRC, in accordance with Citizenship Act, 1955 and Citizenship Rules, 2003 in all parts of Assam.

Creating a district

- Malerkotla recently became the 23rd district in Punjab.
- The power to create new districts or alter or abolish existing districts rests with the State governments.
- This can either be done through an executive order or by passing a law in the State Assembly.

- States argue that smaller districts lead to better administration and governance.
- The Centre has no role to play in the alteration of districts or creation of new ones.
- The Census results showed that between 2001-2011, as many as 46 districts were created by States.

PM Swasthya Suraksha Yojana

- The Central government has approved setting up 22 new All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) so far under Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY)
- PMSSY was announced in 2003 with objectives of correcting regional imbalances in the availability of affordable/ reliable tertiary healthcare services and also to augment facilities for quality medical education in the country.
- The PMSSY is implemented by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- It has two components: Setting up new AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences) and Upgradation of government medical colleges in various states.

Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay National Welfare Fund For Sportspersons

- The Fund was set up in 1982 with a view to assisting outstanding Sportspersons
- The scheme was revised in May, 2016 to provide for lump sum ex-gratia assistance to outstanding Sportspersons
- Provision of pension has been done away with as there is already a Scheme of Pension for Meritorious Sportspersons.

Personal guarantors liable for corporate debt

- The Supreme Court has now upheld this move.
- This will allow lenders to initiate insolvency proceedings against personal guarantors, who are usually promoters of big business houses.
- The proceedings of the resolution process will be adjudicated by the National Companies Law Tribunal (NCLT), for companies; and the Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT), for individuals.
- Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board will regulate insolvency professionals, insolvency

professional agencies and information utilities set up under the Code.

- The Board will consist of representatives of Reserve Bank of India, and the Ministries of Finance, Corporate Affairs and Law.

Children under mid-day meal scheme to get aid

- The Centre has decided to give about ₹100 each to children studying in Class 1 to Class 8 in government schools, who are beneficiaries of the Mid-Day Meal scheme.
- The money, ₹1200 crore in total, will be given to 11.8 crore children through direct benefit transfer as a one-time payment.
- The money comes from the cooking cost component of the scheme. (Cooking costs formed the largest component of the Central allocation for the Mid-Day Meal scheme in 2021-22).
- It covers the prices of ingredients such as pulses, vegetables, cooking oil, salt, and condiments.
- The scheme guarantees one meal to all children in government and aided schools and madaras supported under Samagra Shiksha.
- Students up to Class VIII are guaranteed one nutritional cooked meal at least 200 days in a year.
- The Scheme comes under the Ministry of HRD.

D-voter, or doubtful voter

- A person whose citizenship was doubtful or was under dispute was categorized as 'D- Voters' during the preparation of National Register of Citizens in Assam.
- They have not been defined in the Citizenship Act, 1955 or the Citizenship Rules of 2003.
- A declared foreigner, or DF, is a person marked by Foreigners' Tribunal (FT) for allegedly failing to prove their citizenship after the State police's Border wing marks him or her as an illegal immigrant.
- The Foreigner tribunals are set up under the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964.
- The tribunals are quasi-judicial bodies, to determine if a person staying illegally is a "foreigner" or not.
- Composition: Advocates not below the age of

35 years of age with at least 7 years of practice (or) Retired Judicial Officers from the Assam Judicial Service (or) Retired IAS of ACS Officers (not below the rank of Secretary/Addl. Secretary) having experience in quasi-judicial works.

- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has amended the Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964, and has empowered district magistrates in all States and Union Territories to set up tribunals (quasi-judicial bodies) to decide whether a person staying illegally in India is a foreigner or not.

DETER committees

- To manage Covid pandemic at the local level, the Karnataka state government has formed Decentralized Triage and Emergency Response (DETER) Committees at ward-levels in Bengaluru.
- The objective is to strengthen government response and management of the coronavirus pandemic.
- These teams will emphasise on the distribution of localised action in a decentralised system of disaster response.
- They will act as the first-point contact for those infected with Covid-19.
- The 3E Strategy is explained as follows: Efficient admission to hospitals facilitated by community triage services; Efficient discharge from hospitals enabling efficient bedturnover; Empowering hospitals, doctors, and their management with supportive supervision.

Special Window for Affordable & Mid-Income Housing (SWAMIH)

- Centre's Special Window for Affordable & Mid-Income Housing (SWAMIH) has completed its first residential project.
- Rivali Park in suburban Mumbai is the first housing project in India to have received funding under the SWAMIH Fund.
- SWAMIH Investment Fund has been formed to complete construction of stalled, RERA-registered affordable and mid-income category housing projects which are stuck due to paucity of funds.

- The fund was set up as a Category-II AIF (Alternate Investment Fund) debt fund registered with SEBI.
- The Investment Manager of the Fund is SBICAP Ventures, a wholly-owned subsidiary of SBI Capital Markets, which in turn is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the State Bank of India.
- The Sponsor of the Fund is the Secretary, Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance.
- AIFs created/funded under the Special Window would solicit investment into the fund from the Government and other private investors including cash-rich financial institutions, sovereign wealth funds, public and private banks, domestic pension and provident funds, global pension funds and other institutional investors.

Community Based Inclusive Development (CBID) Program

- It is launched recently by the Union Ministry of Social Justice.
- The program aims to create a pool of grass-root rehabilitation workers at community level who can work alongside ASHA and Anganwadi workers to handle cross disability issues and facilitate inclusion of persons with disabilities in the society.
- The program has been designed to provide competency based knowledge and skills among these workers to enhance their ability for successfully discharging their duties. These workers will be called 'Divyang Mitra'
- The National Board of Examination in Rehabilitation under the Rehabilitation Council of India will conduct examinations and award certificates to pass-out candidates. 660

One Stop Centre Scheme / Sakhi

- The Central government will set up One Stop Centres (OSCs) across 10 missions to provide assistance to Indian women who are survivors of gender-based violence.
- The missions where the OSCs will come up are Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, UAE, Jeddah and Riyadh in Saudi Arabia, Australia, Canada and Singapore.
- It is a sub – scheme of Umbrella Scheme for

National Mission for Empowerment of women.

- The OSC will support all women including girls below 18 years of age affected by violence, irrespective of caste, class, religion, region, sexual orientation or marital status.
- The Scheme will be funded through Nirbhaya Fund.

Kerala's Bell of Faith

- The 'Bell of Faith' scheme will now be implemented for senior citizens staying alone in villages.
- It is a safety project conceived under Kerala's Community Policing Scheme.
- It will help elderly citizens attract the attention of their neighbours using a loud, remote-controlled alarm in emergencies.
- It sets an example for community participation to ensure the well-being and safety of the elderly.

PM CARES For Children- Empowerment of COVID Affected Children

- The scheme has been launched for support & empowerment of Covid affected children.
- All children who have lost both parents or surviving parent or legal guardian/adoptive parents due to Covid 19 will be supported under the scheme.
- Fixed Deposit in the name of the child: Rs 10 lakh for each child when he or she reaches 18 years of age.
- For children under 10 years: Admission will be given in the nearest Kendriya Vidyalaya or in a private school as a day scholar.
- For children between 11-18 years: The child will be given admission in any Central Government residential school such as Sainik School, Navodaya Vidyalaya
- The child will be assisted in obtaining education loan for Professional courses / Higher Education in India as per the existing Education Loan norms.
- All children will be enrolled as a beneficiary under Ayushman Bharat Scheme (PMJAY) with a health insurance cover of Rs 5 lakhs.

One Health approach

- Two-thirds of existing and emerging infectious

diseases are zoonotic, or can be transferred between animals and humans, and vice versa

- One Health concept is the collaborative efforts of multiple disciplines working locally, nationally, and globally, to attain optimal health for people, animals and our environment, as defined by the One Health Initiative Task Force.
- One Health model facilitates interdisciplinary approach in disease control so as to control emerging and existing zoonotic threats.
- India's One Health vision derives its blueprint from the agreement between the tripartite-plus alliance comprising the FAO, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the WHO and the UNEP

SUTRA Model

- SUTRA (Susceptible, Undetected, Tested (positive), and Removed Approach) model uses three main parameters to predict the course of the pandemic
- Beta: Also called contact rate, which measures how many people an infected person infects per day. It is related to the R0 value, which is the number of people an infected person spreads the virus to over the course of their infection.
- Reach: It is a measure of the exposure level of the population to the pandemic.
- Epsilon: It is the ratio of detected and undetected cases.

Article 311:

Article 311 deals with dismissal, removal or reduction in rank of persons employed in civil capacities under the Union or a State.

Article 311(2), sub clause (c) notes that where the President or the Governor, as the case may be, is satisfied that in the interest of the security of the State, it is not expedient to hold such inquiry into the allegations against a person, enquiry may be skipped.

e-Sanjeevani OPD

- The e-Sanjeevani OPD is a flagship telemedicine platform of the Government, developed by the Centre for Development of Advance Computing (C-DAC), Mohali under the aegis of Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).
- It provides free consultations to Indian citizens.

Indicative Notes

- It is a new feature on the Supreme Court's website to provide concise summaries of landmark judgments in an easy-to-understand format.
- This will serve as a useful resource for media persons and the general public who wish to be better informed about the rulings of the court.

ELDERLINE

- The Ministry of Social Justice has started state-wise call centres in five major states to address the problems faced by elderly people in the wake of the covid pandemic.
- The toll free helpline for elderly persons called ELDERLINE is expected to become operational in all states by the end of May 2021.

SAMVEDNA

- SAMVEDNA tele counselling service is for psychological support to children to address their stress, anxiety, fear and other issues during the coronavirus pandemic.
- The service is provided by the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR).
- SAMVEDNA is an acronym for Sensitizing Action on Mental Health Vulnerability through Emotional Development and Necessary Acceptance.



ACUMEN IAS

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The Financial Action Task Force

- FATF is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 on the initiative of the G7.
- It is a policy-making body which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas.
- The FATF Secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris.
- Initially it was established to examine and develop measures to combat money laundering.
- In October 2001, the FATF expanded its mandate to incorporate efforts to combat terrorist financing, in addition to money laundering.
- In 2012, it added efforts to counter the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

BRICS Employment Working Group (EWG)

Meeting

- 1st BRICS Employment Working Group (EWG) Meeting was held recently at New Delhi.
- India has assumed BRICS Presidency this year.
- Social Security Agreement (SSA) is a bilateral agreement between India and a foreign country designed to protect the interests of cross border workers.
- The agreement provides for avoidance of 'double coverage' and ensures equality of treatment to workers of both countries from a social security perspective.
- SSAs broadly provide benefits:
 - Avoiding making of double social security contributions by the workers (detachment)
 - Easy remittance of benefits (Exportability)
 - Aggregating the contribution periods (in two countries) to prevent loss of benefits (Totalization)
 - Provide for disability insurance benefits to the Indian nationals working abroad.

Gaza Strip

- The Gaza Strip is an entirely artificial creation that emerged in 1948 when roughly three-fourths of Palestine's Arab population was

displaced, in some cases expelled, during the course of Israel's creation.

- Most of the refugees were scattered across the region in neighboring countries like Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.
- The conflict has been ongoing for more than a 100 years between Jews and Arabs over a piece of land between Jordan river and the Mediterranean sea.
- The Balfour Declaration was issued after Britain gained control with the aim of establishing a home for the Jews in Palestine.
- In 1947, the UN voted for Palestine to be split into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem becoming an international city.
- It was in the year 1948 that Britain lifted its control over the area and Jews declared the creation of Israel.
- Israeli forces captured East Jerusalem and the West Bank, various areas of Syrian Golan Heights, Gaza and the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula in the year 1967.

U.K. plans digital border

- The move means those coming to Britain without a visa or immigration status will need an Electronic Travel Authorisation - similar to that used in the United States - as part of plans to be implemented by the end of 2025.
- Digital identity checks will also be used to reduce the need to visit visa application centres.
- Digitising the border will mean officials can now count who is coming in and out of the country and whether they have permission to be there.

UAE's Golden Visa

- In 2019, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) implemented a new system for long-term residence visas, thereby enabling foreigners to live, work and study in the UAE without the need of a national sponsor and with 100 per cent ownership of their business.
- The Golden Visa system essentially offers long-term residency (5 and 10 years) to people belonging to investors, entrepreneurs, individuals with outstanding talents the likes of

researchers, medical professionals and those within the scientific and knowledge fields, and remarkable students.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

- Though India is not a party to the UN Refugee Conventions, the country is a party to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights of 1966.
- Non-refoulement is the principle under international law that a person fleeing from persecution from his own country should not be forced to return.

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

- ADB is a regional development bank.
- It was established on 19 December 1966 and headquartered at Manila, Philippines.
- bank admits the members of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and non-regional developed countries.
- ADB now has 68 members, 49 from within Asia.
- Voting rights are distributed in proportion with members' capital subscriptions.
- ADB's five largest shareholders are Japan and the United States (each with 15.6% of total shares), the People's Republic of China (6.4%), India (6.3%), and Australia (5.8%).

Arctic Science Ministerial

- India is participating in the 3rd Arctic Science Ministerial (ASM3) - the global platform for discussing research and cooperation in the Arctic region.
- The first two meetings were held in the USA in 2016 and Germany in 2018, respectively.
- ASM3, jointly organised by Iceland and Japan, is the first Ministerial meeting being held in Asia.
- The theme for this year is 'Knowledge for a Sustainable Arctic'.
- Since 2013, India enjoys 'Observer' status in the Arctic Council with twelve other countries (Japan, China, France, Germany, UK, Italy, Switzerland, Poland, Spain, Netherlands, Singapore, and South Korea).
- India's engagement with the Arctic dates back

to 1920 with the signing of the Svalbard Treaty in Paris.

- India has a permanent research station in the Arctic called Himadri at NyAlesund, Svalbard Area in Norway.
- It has also deployed a multi-sensor moored observatory called IndARC in the Kongsfjorden fjord

Arctic council

- It is an Intergovernmental forum which addresses issues faced by the Arctic governments and people living in the Arctic region.
- It is Not a treaty-based international organization but rather an international forum that operates on the basis of consensus.
- The decisions, recommendations or guidelines of the Arctic Council are non-enforceable and are strictly the prerogative of the individual state.
- The 1996 Ottawa Declaration lists the following countries as Members of the Arctic Council: Canada, the Kingdom of Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, the Russian Federation, Sweden and the United States.
- In addition, six organizations representing Arctic indigenous peoples have status as Permanent Participants.

Diplomatic immunity

- Diplomatic immunity is granted on the basis of two conventions called the Vienna Conventions, the Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961 and The Convention on Consular Relations, 1963.
- According to the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, 1961, the immunity enjoyed by a diplomat posted in the embassy is inviolable.
- The diplomat cannot be arrested or detained and his house will have the same inviolability and protection as the embassy.

Lithuania quits China's 17+1 cooperation

- The 17+1 initiative is a China-led format founded in 2012 in Budapest with an aim to expand cooperation between Beijing and the Central and Eastern European (CEE) member countries, with investments and trade for the

development of the CEE region.

- The framework also focuses on infrastructure projects such as bridges, motorways, railway lines and modernisation of ports in the member states.
- The platform is largely seen as an extension of China's flagship Belt and Road initiative (BRI).

International Atomic Energy Agency

- The speaker of Iran's parliament said a three-month monitoring deal between Tehran and the UN nuclear watchdog- IAEA has expired and that its access to images from inside some Iranian nuclear sites would cease.
- IAEA was set up as the world's "Atoms for Peace" organization in 1957 within the United Nations family.
- It reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.

Interpol

- The International Criminal Police Organisation, or Interpol, is a 194-member intergovernmental organization and is headquartered in Lyon, France.
- Formed in 1923 as the International Criminal Police Commission, and started calling itself Interpol in 1956.
- India joined the organisation in 1949, and is one of its oldest members.
- Countering terrorism, promoting border integrity worldwide, protection of vulnerable communities, providing a secure cyberspace for people and businesses, curbing illicit markets, supporting environment security, and promoting global integrity
- Interpol General Assembly is Interpol's supreme governing body, and comprises representatives from all its member countries.

Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)

- ECOWAS is a regional political and economic union of fifteen countries located in West Africa.
- It was established in 1975, with the signing of the Treaty of Lagos.
- The goal of ECOWAS is to achieve collective self-sufficiency for its member states by creating a single large trade bloc by building a

full economic and trading union.

P-8I patrol aircraft

- U.S. clears sale of six P-8I patrol aircraft to India.
- P-8I is a long-range, multi-mission maritime patrol aircraft manufactured by Boeing for the Indian Navy.
- It can conduct anti-submarine warfare, intelligence, maritime patrol, and surveillance and reconnaissance missions.

Global Innovation Partnership (GIP)

- Cabinet gives ex-post facto approval to MoU between India and UK on Global Innovation Partnership (GIP).
- GIP will support Indian innovators to scale up their innovations in other countries thereby helping them explore new markets and become self-sustainable.
- GIP innovations will focus on Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) related sectors thereby assisting recipient countries achieve their SDGs.

WOMEN IAS

ECONOMY

Care economy

- According to the OECD, unpaid care work refers to all unpaid services provided within a household for its members, including care of persons, housework and voluntary community work.
- McKinsey estimates that women do 75% of the world's total unpaid care work.
- The economic contribution of women is 17% of India's.
- India has slipped 28 places to rank 140th among 156 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2021.
- Women's labour force participation rate fell from 24.8 per cent to 22.3 per cent world wide.

National Programme on Advanced Chemistry Cell Battery Storage

- The Cabinet has approved the proposal of Department of Heavy Industry for implementation of the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme 'National Programme on Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery Storage
- It is a ₹18,100 crore production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for building factories to manufacture batteries.
- The plan is to set up 50 gigawatt hour (GWh) manufacturing capacity for advanced chemistry cell batteries by attracting investments totaling ₹45,000 crore.
- Advanced Chemistry Cells (ACC) are the new generation of advanced storage technologies that can store electric energy either as electrochemical or as chemical energy and convert it back to electric energy as and when required.
- All the demand of the ACCs is currently being met through imports in India.

NITI Aayog report on digital financial inclusion

- NITI Aayog and Mastercard have released a report titled 'Connected Commerce: Creating a Roadmap for a Digitally Inclusive Bharat'.
- The report identifies challenges in accelerating digital financial inclusion in India and provides

recommendations for making digital services accessible to its 1.3 billion citizens.

Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH)

- The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare has provided an enhanced allocation of Rs. 2250 Crore for the year 2021-22 for 'Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture' (MIDH).
- This Centrally Sponsored scheme covers vegetables, fruits, roots and tuber crops, aromatic plants, flowers, spices, bamboo, coconut, cashew and cocoa.
- MIDH also provides technical support and advice to state horticultural missions, Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), Saffron Mission and the National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA).
- Under MIDH, Government of India (GOI) contributes 60%, of total outlay for developmental programmes in all the states except states in North East and Himalayas, 40% share is contributed by State Governments.

PM-Kisan scheme

- It is a central sector scheme with 100 per cent funding from the Government of India.
- Under the scheme, income support of ₹6,000 per year in three equal installments of ₹2000 is provided to small and marginal farmers having a combined land holding of up to two hectares.
- Affluent farmers have been excluded from the scheme such as Income Tax payers in last assessment year, professionals like Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers, Chartered Accountants etc and pensioners drawing at least Rs.10,000/- per month (excluding MTS/Class IV/Group D employees).

MCA21 Version 3.0

- Minister of Corporate Affairs has launched the first phase of Ministry of Corporate Affairs' (MCA) MCA21 Version 3.0 (V3.0).
- MCA21 is an e-Governance initiative of Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) that enables easy and secure access of the MCA services to the corporate entities, professionals and citizens of

India. It is the first Mission Mode eGovernance project of Gol.

- MCA21 V3 is a technology-driven forward-looking project, envisioned to strengthen enforcement, promote Ease of Doing Business, enhance the user experience, and facilitate seamless integration and data exchange among Regulators.



SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Black fungus

- It is a disease being detected relatively frequently among Covid-19 patients in some states.
- It is a fungal infection also known as mucormycosis.
- The disease often manifests in the skin and also affects the lungs and the brain.
- It is caused by a group of moulds known as mucormycetes present naturally in the environment.

White fungus

- This infection can be caused due to low immunity or if people come in contact with things that contain these moulds like water, etc.
- Patients of white fungus show Covid-like symptoms but test negative; the infection can be diagnosed through CT-Scan or X-ray.
- The exact cause is unknown yet.
- White fungus can affect not just the lungs but also other parts of the body
- The fault line of poor health infrastructure

Monoclonal antibody therapies

- Monoclonal antibodies are artificially created antibodies that aim to aid the body's natural immune system.
- They target a specific antigen — a protein from the pathogen that induces immune response.
- Monoclonal antibodies can be created in the lab by exposing white blood cells to a particular antigen.
- To increase the quantity of antibodies produced, a single white blood cell is cloned, which in turn is used to create identical copies of the antibodies.

Lumpy Skin Disease

- Lumpy Skin Disease is a viral illness that causes prolonged morbidity in cattle and buffaloes.
- It is caused by the poxvirus Lumpy skin disease virus (LSDV).
- It spreads through mosquitoes, flies and ticks and also through saliva and contaminated water and food.

- In India it was first reported from Mayurbhanj, Odisha in August 2019.
- There is no treatment for the virus, so prevention by vaccination is the most effective means of control.

Israel's Iron Dome

- Recently, rockets fired from Gaza were intercepted by the Israeli Iron Dome air defence system.
- Deployed in 2011, it is a short-range, ground-to-air, air defence system that includes a radar and Tamir interceptor missiles that track and neutralise any rockets or missiles aimed at Israeli targets.
- It is used for countering rockets, artillery & mortars (CRAM) as well as aircraft, helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles.
- The Iron Dome has three main systems that work together to provide a shield over the area where it is deployed, handling multiple threats.
- It has a detection and tracking radar to spot any incoming threats, a battle management and weapon control system (BMC), and a missile firing unit.

Parker Solar Probe

- Parker Solar Probe will travel through the sun's atmosphere, closer to the surface than any spacecraft before it, facing brutal heat and radiation conditions and ultimately providing humanity with the closest-ever observations of a star.
- Parker Solar Probe has three objectives - Trace the flow of energy that heats and accelerates the solar corona and solar wind, Determine the structure and dynamics of the plasma and magnetic fields at the sources of the solar wind and Explore mechanisms that accelerate and transport energetic particles.

SpaceX's Starship

- Starship is a full-scale, stainless steel, bullet-shaped rocketship built by SpaceX.
- SpaceX has described Starship as the world's most powerful launch vehicle with an ability to carry over 100 metric tonnes to the Earth's orbit.

- Starship can deliver satellites further and at lower marginal costs than Falcon vehicles and it can ferry both cargo and crew to the International Space Station (ISS).

NASA's OSIRIS-Rex

- OSIRIS-REx is NASA's first mission to visit a near-Earth asteroid, survey its surface and collect a sample from it.
- Asteroid Bennu is considered to be an ancient asteroid that has not gone through a lot of composition-altering change through billions of years, which means that below its surface lie chemicals and rocks from the birth of the solar system.
- Bennu is a B-type asteroid, implying that it contains significant amounts of carbon and various other minerals.
- Because of its high carbon content, the asteroid reflects about four per cent of the light that hits it, which is very low when compared with a planet like Venus, which reflects about 65 per cent of the light that hits it. Earth reflects about 30 per cent.

NASA-ESA Solar Orbiter Spacecraft

- NASA and European Space Agency's spacecraft has captured the first solar eruption on the Sun's surface. These eruptions are also known as coronal mass ejections (CME).
- The spacecraft was launched from Cape Canaveral on a United Launch Alliance Atlas V rocket
- This is the first mission that will provide images of the sun's north and south poles using a suite of six instruments on board that will capture the spacecraft's view.

NPCI refuses to ban cryptocurrency trades in India

- National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has refused to ban cryptocurrency transactions.
- It has put the onus on banks whether to ban transactions of cryptocurrency trades or not.
- The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) serves as an umbrella body for the operation of retail payment in India.
- This organization was established by the Reserve Bank of India along with the Indian Bank's Association under the provisions of the

Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.

Intellectual property waiver for Covid-19 vaccines

- The IP waiver might open up space for production of Covid vaccines with emergency use authorisations (EUA).
- Most production is currently concentrated in high-income countries; production by middle-income countries has been happening through licensing or technology transfer agreements.
- The countries had asked the TRIPS Council to recommend a waiver on the implementation, application and enforcement of four sections in the second part of the agreement.

Drug 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG)

- The DCGI has granted emergency use approval to DRDO's 2-DG drug for treatment in moderate to severe cases of Covid-19.
- The drug 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG) has been developed by DRDO's Institute of Nuclear Medicine and Allied Sciences (INMAS) in collaboration with Hyderabad-based Dr Reddy's Laboratories.

PIMS-TS

- Paediatric inflammatory multisystem syndrome (PIMS-TS) also known as multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C) is a rare condition associated with SARS-CoV-2 infection.

Vitamin D

- Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin.
- It is produced when sunlight (or artificial light, particularly in the ultraviolet region of 190-400 nm wavelength) falls on the skin and triggers a chemical reaction to a cholesterol based molecule, and converts it into calcidiol in the liver and into calcitriol in the kidney.
- It is known to help in having the right amount of calcium in the bones, catalyse the process of protecting cell membranes from damage, preventing the inflammation of tissues and helping stop tissues from forming fibres and weakening bones from becoming brittle, leading to osteoporosis.
- Vitamin D deficiency can cause rickets in children and osteomalacia in adults.

ENVIRONMENT AND GEOGRAPHY

Climate change causing a shift in Earth's axis

- As the axis moves due to changes in how the Earth's mass is distributed around the planet. Thus, the poles move when the axis moves, and the movement is called polar motion.
- It can change the length of the day by a few milliseconds.
- According to NASA, data from the 20th century shows that the spin axis drifted about 10 centimetres per year.
- Since the 1990s, climate change has caused billions of tonnes of glacial ice to melt into oceans. This has caused the Earth's poles to move in new directions.

Lineament

- A lineament is a linear feature in a landscape dictated by an underlying geological structure such as a fault.
- An unfamiliar lineament is one factor behind frequent earthquakes in northern Assam's Sonitpur area.
- According to the Geological Survey of India (GSI), Sonitpur district lies within a tectonically complex triangular area bounded by the east-west trending Atherkhet Fault, the northwest-southeast trending Kopili Fault and a north-south trending lineament.
- The Siang Fracture, Yemla Fault, Namula Thrust and Canyon Thrust are spread across the northeast and are active along with Main Himalayan Thrust, Main Boundary Thrust, Main Central Thrust and several subsidiary faults.

Cyclone Tauktae

- The word Tauktae has been suggested by Myanmar, which means 'gecko', a distinctively vocal lizard, in the Burmese language.
- A WMO/ESCAP (World Meteorological Organisation/United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) Panel on Tropical Cyclones agreed in principle to assign names to the tropical cyclones in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea during its 27th session held in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, in 2000.

- The naming of the tropical cyclones over the north Indian Ocean commenced from September 2004, with names provided by eight members, starting with Bangladesh, followed by India.

Cyclone Yaas

- The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has informed that a low pressure area is formed over north Andaman Sea and adjoining east central Bay of Bengal around
 - The name 'Yaas' was suggested by Oman and refers to a tree with good fragrance and in English, the word is similar to Jasmine.
 - Due to warming of the surface, the warm moist air over the ocean rises upwards following which cool air rushes in to fill the void, they too get warm and rise — the cycle continues.
 - Wind always blows from high pressure to low pressure areas. High pressure areas are created in the cold region while low is created in the warm regions.
 - Polar regions are high pressure areas as the amount of sunlight here is less than the tropical region. So, wind blows from polar regions to tropical regions.
 - The Earth's rotation on its axis causes deflection of the wind (in the tropical region as the speed of spinning of Earth is higher compared to polar sides due to its spherical shape — blowing from both the polar regions. Wind coming from the Arctic is deflected to the right while Antarctic wind deflects to the left side.
 - When it reaches the warmer place, cool air starts getting attracted to the centre to fill the gap.
 - Cyclone dissipates when it hits the land as the warm water that rises and creates space for cool water is no longer available on land.
 - Also, the moist air that rises up forms clouds leading to rains that accompany gusting winds during cyclones.
- ## Sun's halo
- A rainbow around the Sun known as a Sun halo, was observed recently in Bengaluru.

- The halo that appeared around the Sun is a 22-degree ring that appears due to the dispersion of light as white light passes through ice crystals found in upper-level cirrus clouds, causing the halo to have colours.
- The clouds contain millions of tiny ice crystals, which refract, split and even reflect the light to give an impression of a circular rainbow ring.
- Seen around the Moon, lunar halos are mostly colourless as moonlight is not very bright.

Supermoon

- A supermoon occurs when the Moon's orbit is closest to the Earth at the same time that the Moon is full.
- In an year, there may be two to four full supermoons and two to four new supermoons in a row.
- As the Moon orbits the Earth, there is a point of time when the distance between the two is the least (called the perigee, about 360,000 km from the Earth) and a point of time when the distance is the most (called the apogee, about 405,000 km from the Earth).

Biodiesel from Used Cooking Oil

- Union Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas flagged off the first supply of UCO (Used Cooking Oil) based Biodiesel blended Diesel.
- To create an eco-system for collection and conversion of UCO into Biodiesel, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas had initiated Expressions of Interest for Procurement of Biodiesel produced from Used Cooking Oil on the occasion of World Biofuel Day on 10th August 2019.

UN Report on human-caused methane emissions

- The report, titled Global Methane Assessment: Benefits and Costs of Mitigating Methane Emissions was recently released by the Climate and Clean Air Coalition and the United Nations Environment Programme.
- Human-caused methane emissions are increasing faster currently than at any other time since record keeping began in the 1980s.
- Carbon dioxide levels have dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, methane in the atmosphere reached record levels last year.

- Methane was responsible for about 30 percent of warming since pre-industrial times.
- Most human-caused methane emissions came from three sectors: Fossil fuels, waste and agriculture.

Green panel allows Great Nicobar plan

- The proposal includes an international container transshipment terminal, a greenfield international airport, a power plant and a township complex spread over 166 sq. km.
- Galathea Bay is an iconic nesting site in India of the enigmatic Giant Leatherback, the world's largest marine turtle.

Jal Jeevan Mission

- JJM envisages supply of 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household through Functional Household Tap Connections by 2024.
- JJM looks to create a jan andolan for water, thereby making it everyone's priority.
- The fund sharing pattern between the Centre and states is 90:10 for Himalayan and North-Eastern States, 50:50 for other states, and 100% for Union Territories.

WWF report on snow leopard

- The World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) has released a report titled Over 100 Years of Snow Leopard Research — A spatially explicit review of the state of knowledge in the snow leopard range.
- More than 70 per cent habitat of the snow leopard, over 12 Asian countries, remains unresearched.
- Nepal, India and China had conducted the most snow leopard research, followed by Mongolia and Pakistan.
- Globally, there could be as few as 4,000 snow leopards left in Asia's high mountains and this remaining population faces continued and emerging threats.
- India is also party to the Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection (GSLEP) Programme since 2013.
- India has identified three large landscapes, namely, Hemis-Spiti across Ladakh and Himachal Pradesh; Nanda Devi – Gangotri in Uttarakhand; and Khangchendzonga – Tawang

across Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh.

- Project Snow Leopard (PSL) was launched in 2009 to promote an inclusive and participatory approach to conserve snow leopards and their habitat.
- Snow Leopard is in the list of 22 critically endangered species for the recovery programme of the Ministry of Environment Forest & Climate Change.
- Snow leopards are categorized as 'Vulnerable' by IUCN and in the Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972.
- They are listed in Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), revealing the need for the highest conservation status to the species, both globally and in India.

Iceberg A-76- World's largest iceberg breaks off in Antarctica

- Iceberg A-76 calved from the western side of the Ronne Ice Shelf in Antarctica and is now floating on the Weddell Sea.
- The Antarctica ice sheet is warming faster than the rest of the planet, causing melting of snow and ice covers as well as the retreat of glaciers, especially around the Weddell Sea.

NGT upholds rights of pastoralists in Banni grasslands

- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) ordered all encroachments to be removed from Gujarat's Banni grasslands within six months
- The court also said the Maldharis would continue to hold the right to conserve the community forests in the area, granted to them as per the provisions in Section 3 of Forest Rights Act, 2006.
- Maldharis are a tribal herdsman community in Gujarat, India. Maldhari community breeds Banni Buffaloes, a species endemic to the region. The buffaloes are adaptive to Kutch's hot weather conditions.

High levels of mercury

- According to recent research, high concentrations of mercury were found in the water bodies fed by the Greenland Ice Sheet.

- In the water bodies fed by the Greenland Ice Sheet, scientists found dissolved mercury levels in excess of 150 ng L⁻¹, far higher than an average river.
- Mercury-rich bedrock is weathered during the slow movement of glaciers down the slope of hills and the ground particles are carried into the streams as the glacier melts.
- Mercury is considered by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as one of the top ten chemicals or groups of chemicals of major public health concern.
- Minamata Disease is a disorder caused by methylmercury poisoning that was first described in the inhabitants of Minamata Bay, Japan and resulted from their eating fish contaminated with mercury industrial waste.
- The Minamata Convention on Mercury is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of mercury and its compounds.

National Mission on use of Biomass in coal based thermal power plants

- To increase the level of co-firing from present 5% to higher levels to have a larger share of carbon neutral power generation from the thermal power plants.
- To take up R&D activity in boiler design to handle the higher amount of silica, alkalis in the biomass pellets. (c) To facilitate overcoming the constraints in supply chain of bio mass pellets and agro- residue and its transport upto to the power plants.
- Biomass Cofiring refers to the concurrent blending and combustion of biomass materials with other fuels such as natural gas and coal within a boiler, which reduce the use of fossil fuels for energy generation and emissions without significantly increasing costs and infrastructure investments.
- Coal and biomass cofiring accounts for reduction of CO₂ and other pollutant (SO_x, NO_x) emissions to the atmosphere
- Cofiring biomass with coal may record no loss in total boiler efficiency after adjusting combustion output for the new fuel mixture.

Uranium In India

- In India, Uranium deposits occur in the Dharwar rocks.
- It occurs along the Singbhum Copper belt (Jharkhand); Udaipur, Alwar and Jhunjhunu districts of Rajasthan, Durg district of Chhattisgarh, Bhandara district of Maharashtra and Kullu district of Himachal Pradesh. Significant quantity of reserves are there in parts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana

Bhitarkanika National Park

- Bhitarkanika National Park, located in Odisha, is famous for its mangroves, migratory birds, turtles, estuarine crocodiles, and countless creeks.
- It is India's second-largest mangrove forest.
- The Bhitarkanika is represented by 3 Protected Areas, the Bhitarkanika National Park, the Bhitarkanika Wildlife Sanctuary and the Gahirmatha Marine Sanctuary.
- Bhitarkanika is located in the estuary of Brahmani, Baitarani, Dhamra, and Mahanadi river systems.

Blackbucks

- Odisha's blackbuck population has doubled in the last six years, according to figures from the latest population census released recently by the chief conservator of forest (wildlife).
- Blackbucks are found only in the Ganjam district in the southern part of the state.
- The blackbuck is a Schedule-1 animal according to the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 (amended in 1992) and is considered as 'Vulnerable' according to the Red Data Book.
- The blackbuck is known in Odisha and Ganjam as Krushnasara Mruga.

Rishiganga

- It is a river in the Chamoli district, Uttarakhand, India.
- It begins from the Uttari Nanda Devi and Dakshini Nanda Devi Glaciers on the Nanda Devi mountain.
- Continuing through the Nanda Devi National Park, it flows into the Dhauliganga River near the village Rini.

Sunderlal Bahuguna

- Environmentalist and Gandhian Sunderlal

Bahuguna is no more.

- He was one of the founders of the Chipko movement, in the 1970s to save Himalayan forests.

New Big 5 project

- It is an international initiative of more than 250 of the world's wildlife photographers, conservationists and wildlife charities.
- It is created by British photographer Graeme Green.
- Its aim is to raise awareness about the crisis facing the world's wildlife from threats including habitat loss, human-wildlife conflict, poaching, illegal wildlife trade and climate change.

China completes Tibet highway

- It enables greater access to remote areas along the disputed border with Arunachal Pradesh in India.
- It passes through the Grand Canyon of the Yarlung Zangbo river, as the Brahmaputra is called in Tibet.

Taiwan Strait

- The Taiwan Strait, also known as the Formosa Strait, is a 180 km wide strait separating Taiwan and mainland China.
- The strait is currently part of the South China Sea and connects to the East China Sea to the north.
- The entire strait is on Asia's continental shelf.

Corpse flower

- The ultra-rare plant is known to bloom only once every seven to ten years
- The plant is native to Indonesia.
- It was listed as an endangered plant in 2018 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

GI-certified Gholvad Chikoo

- GI-certified Dahanu Gholvad Chikoo from Maharashtra begins UK journey.
- GI certification of Gholvad Sapota is held by Maharashtra Rajya Chikoo Utpadak Sangh and the fruit is known for its sweet and unique taste.
- Sapota is grown in many states- Karnataka, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal

and Andhra Pradesh. Karnataka is known to be the highest grower of the fruit, followed by Maharashtra.

Shuvuuia deserti

- It is a small bird-like nocturnal dinosaur that lived 70 million years ago.
- It was a pheasant-sized, two-legged Cretaceous Period dinosaur weighing about as much as a small house cat.
- It had excellent night vision and superb hearing to thrive.

Dahla Dam

- It is Afghanistan's second-biggest dam.
- It is located in Kandahar Province in Afghanistan and is built on the Arghandab River.

Mount Sinabung

- It is located in Indonesia.
- The volcano has been active since 2010 when it erupted after nearly 400 years of inactivity.

Bao-dhaan

- It is iron-rich rice variety grown in Brahmaputra valley of Assam, without the use of any chemical fertilizer.
- The first consignment of this 'red rice' variety was sent to the US from Assam recently.

Xylophis deepaki

- It is a new snake species discovered recently in Tamil Nadu.
- It is a tiny snake of just 20 cm length with iridescent scales.
- The species is named in honour of Indian herpetologist Deepak Veerappan for his contribution in erecting a new subfamily Xylophiinae to accommodate wood snakes.



ACUMEN IAS