

Monthly Magazine-July 2018

National News

Source:The Hindu.PIB.PRS

General Studies-I : Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

1.Jagannath's return car festival held in Puri

- Lakhs of devotees from across the country and abroad witnessed Lord Jagannath's '**Bahuda Yatra**' -- the **return car festival** -- which was held in this seaside pilgrim town amid tight security on Sunday.
- The **three deities** -- Lord Jagannath, his elder brother Lord Balabhadra and their sister Devi Subhadra -- ended their annual nine-day sojourn to Sri Gundicha Temple, their birth place, **and returned to Sreemandir or Shri Jagannath Temple** on three majestic wooden chariots during the 'Bahuda Yatra'
- The deities were taken to their chariots in an elaborate ritual called '**Pahandi**' to the beating of gongs, cymbals and blowing of conch shells.
- The deities, who had embarked on the nine-day sojourn to the Sri Gundicha Temple during the Rath Yatra on July 14, would finally re-enter the 12th century shrine and again be placed on the 'Ratna Simhasana', the bejewelled throne, following a ceremony called '**Neeladribije**'
- Ahead of 'Neeladribije', the deities would be decorated with '**suna besha**' or golden attire, on Monday on their chariots, which attracts a large number of devotees.

General Studies-II : Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

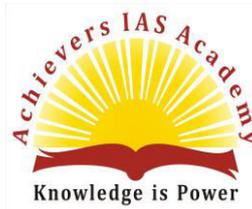
1.'Choosing a partner is a person's fundamental right'

- Choice of a partner is a person's fundamental right, **and it can be a same-sex partner**, Justice D.Y. Chandrachud said on Tuesday.
- The **observation** came on the first day of hearing by a Constitution Bench of petitions challenging the constitutionality of **Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code**, a colonial-era provision **that criminalises private consensual sex between adults.**

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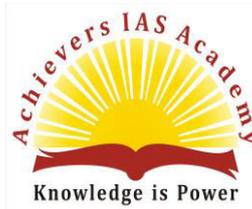
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- He drew his observations from the March 2018 judgment in **the Hadiya case**, which held that neither the state nor one's parents could influence an **adult's choice of partner**. That would be a **violation of the fundamental right to privacy**.

377 and beyond

- The Centre's **cautious stand** keeps the focus only on the need to decriminalise gay sex
- There is finally good reason to believe that consensual gay sex may once again be **decriminalised**.
- The ongoing hearing before a five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court indicates that there is now a better appreciation of the need for **equal constitutional protection to all individuals** without any discrimination than was the case in 2013, when a two-member Bench declined to read down Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code as **homosexuals constituted only a "minuscule minority"**.
- The Centre's stand was believed to be critical when the current hearing began this month. The Union government is cautiously supporting the cause, but it has stopped **short of taking a categorical position**.
- By leaving it to the Supreme Court's wisdom to decide on the constitutionality of Section 377, the Centre has signalled it is **not opposed to the decriminalisation** of same-sex relationships as long as these are limited to consensual acts between **adults in private**.
- At the same time, its position is hedged against the possibility that the Constitution Bench, currently reconsidering the court's 2013 judgment upholding the validity of Section 377, may venture into **other rights for the LGBTQs relating to marriage and inheritance**.
- In the event of the court going into issues and rights that are not slated for reconsideration, it wants to file a detailed counter-affidavit spelling out its stand.
- Observations by the judges of the Bench, including the Chief Justice of India, indicate that it is **now focussing only on Section 377**.
- However, at least one judge has observed that the question involved was not only one relating to sex, but the **right to life and the right to privacy of those in such relationships**.
- The current hearing is taking place against the backdrop of a nine-member Bench's verdict last year in **Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India**, which said "the right to privacy and the protection of sexual orientation lie at the core of the fundamental rights guaranteed by **Articles 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution**".

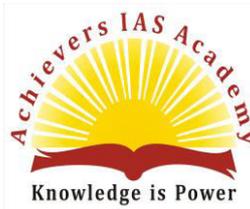


- In other words, a **whole gamut of rights** flowing from the decriminalisation of homosexual relationships must be examined, if not now, then at least as and when they arise.
- Obviously worried about the reaction of some **religious and conservative sections** if homosexuality is decriminalised, the Centre has sought to dissuade the court from going into other related rights.
- Its apprehension, perhaps, is that once homosexuality is no more an offence, it may lead to demands to **legalise same-sex marriages and inheritance** by survivorship among gay partners.
- While the current focus is on the urgent need to **overturn the retrograde judgment of 2013 in Suresh Kumar Koushal**, the extension of constitutional rights to citizens, irrespective of gender and sexual orientation, is long overdue.

General Studies-II : Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

1.L-G bound by ‘aid and advice’ of Delhi govt., says Constitution Bench

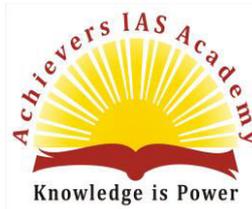
- A **five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court** unanimously held on Wednesday that Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal is bound by the “aid and advice” of the Arvind Kejriwal government.
- In case of **difference of opinion**, the L-G should **straightaway refer the dispute to the President** for a final decision without sitting over it or stultifying the governance in the National Capital, the Bench said. It concluded that the governance of Delhi **cannot rest upon the whims of one functionary** — the Lieutenant-Governor.
- The Lieutenant-Governor has not been entrusted **with any independent decision-making power**. He has to either act on the ‘aid and advice’ of the **Council of Ministers** or he is bound to implement the decision taken by the **President** on a reference being made by him
- The judgment came on appeals filed by the NCT government against an August 4, 2016, **verdict of the Delhi High Court**, which had declared that the L-G has “**complete control of all matters** regarding the National Capital Territory of Delhi, and nothing will happen without the **concurrence of the L-G.**”



- The Supreme Court on Wednesday urged the Lieutenant-Governor and the Kejriwal government to show **statesmanship** in their relationship while coining the term “**collaborative federalism**” to define the inter-dependence between the two.
- “Governments are in their **respective pursuits of development**. The Union government and the State governments should endeavour to address the common problems with the intention of arriving at a solution by showing **statesmanship, combined action and sincere cooperation**. In collaborative federalism, the Union and the State governments should express their readiness to achieve **the common objective and work together for it**.”
- It’s the **people who are sovereign** and the decisions of the elected government in Delhi represent the **public will, perception and popular sentiment**
- Sending a stern message to the L-G, the Supreme Court observed that a well-deliberated legitimate decision of the Council of Ministers cannot be stymied by the **negative attitude of the L-G**. What suffers is the concept of collective responsibility.
- The Supreme Court on Wednesday followed the **1987 Balakrishnan report** to conclude that **Delhi is not a State**.
- The report envisaged that Delhi could not have a situation in which the national capital had “**two governments run by different political parties**. Such conflicts may, at times, prejudice the **national interest**.”

2.A good beginning

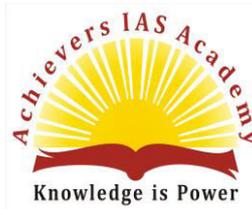
- That the first meeting of the **Cauvery Water Management Authority** took place in a cordial atmosphere augurs well for a **sustained phase of constructive cooperation** among the States concerned.
- The CWMA has been formed by the Centre to implement **the water-sharing award** of the Cauvery Water Dispute Tribunal as modified by **the Supreme Court** earlier this year.
- At its meeting on Monday, it asked Karnataka to release 31.24 tmcft (thousand million cubic feet) of water in July.
- The **quantum is based on the monthly schedule** drawn up by the Tribunal, and excludes the **surplus realised on the Tamil Nadu side** in June.
- For the Authority to successfully perform its role, it needs the cooperation of the States in **gathering data** on rainfall, inflows and outflows, cropping patterns and periodic withdrawals from reservoirs.
- The CWMA is expected to meet **once every 10 days during the monsoon** months. The south-west monsoon has been active for nearly a month, and is forecast to be **normal this year**.



- Therefore, the CWMA **may not face any major problem** in overseeing the release of water to Tamil Nadu.
- As long as the **inflows** into Karnataka's major reservoirs are substantial, it has had **no problem releasing its surplus** water into the lower riparian areas of the basin.
- It is only in a **distress year** that the CWMA will face a significant challenge, as determining the extent of distress, and dividing the shortfall among the States on a **pro rata basis can be tricky exercises**.
- Karnataka is planning to **challenge in the Supreme Court the Centre's** notification constituting the Authority.
- It will be unfortunate if this dispute gets into another round of litigation. The provisions of the **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956**, make it clear that it is the **Centre's duty to notify a scheme** to implement the award of a Tribunal.
- **Parliament has the power to modify the scheme**, or leave it as it stands, but Karnataka's claim that the scheme **requires parliamentary approval before it is implemented is questionable**.
- Further, the **Supreme Court approved the draft scheme** only after finding it to be "in consonance with the dictum and directions in the Award as modified by this Court and also in conformity with Section 6A of the 1956 Act".
- Now that the CWMA has become functional, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Puducherry should approach the issue of sharing the waters of the inter-State river in a spirit of **cooperation and help the Authority in implementing the verdict**.
- The parties concerned should **leave behind the era of litigation**. There is now a **non-political mechanism** available to make sound professional decisions on water availability and sharing of distress, if any, after discussing the issues threadbare.
- After having been locked in a contentious legal dispute for so long, all parties concerned must embark on a new era of **mutually beneficial water-sharing**.

3.Poll position

- There are meaningful electoral reforms beyond simultaneous elections
- It is perhaps no surprise that **political parties are deeply divided** over the idea of holding **simultaneous elections** for the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies.
- During consultations initiated by the **Law Commission** of India, nine parties opposed it, arguing that it went against the **constitutional fabric** and that it would be **impractical**. Four parties backed the concept.
- The **BJP has sought time for a detailed response**, though it is Prime Minister Narendra Modi who has been advocating the idea. The Congress has now spoken out against the proposal.



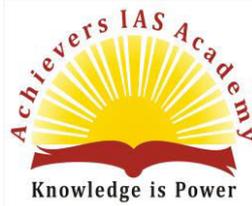
- In principle, there are **obvious advantages** to the ‘one nation, one election’ idea — election expenditure will be **drastically cut** and ruling dispensations will be able to focus on legislation and governance rather than having to be in **campaign mode forever**.
- However, as many of the naysayers have pointed out, the idea is **fraught with practical difficulties**.
- Also, some parties fear that a simultaneous poll, particularly in this era where **news is easily and widely disseminated**, will **privilege national issues over regional ones** even if, arguably, the reverse may happen too.
- The issue is that **synchronisation** would **involve curtailment or extension of the tenure of a House** — the legal propriety of which is questionable.
- The key proposal is that Assemblies be **bunched into two categories** based on whether their terms end close to the 2019 or the 2024 **Lok Sabha elections**.
- Elections could be held for **one group in 2019, and for another in 2024** so that subsequent elections could be synchronised.
- Or, polls could be held for one group along with the 2019 election, and for the rest 30 months later, so that there is **a round of elections every two and a half years**.
- An attempt at solving the problem of regimes falling due to lack of majority is the proposal for a **‘constructive vote of no-confidence’**. This means that when passing a motion expressing lack of trust in a regime, legislators must necessarily propose **an alternative**.
- If a mid-term election has to be held, the term of such a House would only be for the **remainder of its tenure**.
- These two recommendations **may partially address the question raised** by the DMK on whether all Assemblies would be dissolved too if the Lok Sabha has to be prematurely dissolved.
- However, it is unclear if it will be palatable for all parties to invest their time and resources in an election that would win them only a curtailed term.
- Allowing a **one-time waiver of the anti-defection law** to enable the House to elect a leader in the event of a hung House is another proposal.
- However, these reforms **can be adopted even without simultaneous elections**.
- Also, there are **many pressing reforms** needed in the electoral space including curbing the use of **black money to fund elections** and **tackling the staggered manner** in which elections are held in many States.

4.Lok Sabha to debate TDP’s no-trust motion tomorrow

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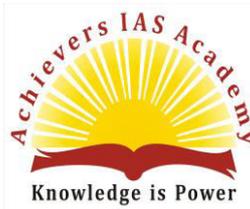


- Lok Sabha Speaker Sumitra Mahajan **accepted a notice** for a no-confidence motion against the Narendra Modi government on the first day of the monsoon session of Parliament on Wednesday. Ms. Mahajan fixed Friday for a debate on the motion by the Lower House.
- This is **the first time that the Modi government will face such a motion**. While notices were moved by Opposition MPs in the last session too, the Speaker did not grant leave for them to be taken up as the support of 50 members could not be ascertained due to protests in the Well of the House.
- A notice for a no-confidence motion against a government is accepted **only if at least 50 members** of the Lower House support it. The Speaker then fixes a date for discussion, followed by a vote. If the **government loses it, it falls**.

General Studies-II : Salient features of the Representation of People's Act

1. Two-constituency norm reasonable: govt. tells SC

- The government on Wednesday objected to a plea to stop candidates from **contesting from two different constituencies**, saying such a limitation infringes on a **person's right to contest the polls** and curtails the polity's choice of candidates.
- The government told the Supreme Court that one-candidate-one-constituency restriction would require a **legislative amendment**.
- The government supported **Section 33 (7) of the Representation of the People Act of 1951** which restricts candidates to contesting from **two** constituencies. Before the amendment, candidates could contest **from any number of constituencies**.
- The poll body informed the Supreme Court that it had proposed the amendment of Section 33(7) way back in July 2004. It was one of the 22 **“urgent electoral reforms”** the Election Commission had suggested to a Rajya Sabha **Parliamentary Standing Committee**.
- The poll body had pointed out that “there have been cases where a person contests election from two constituencies, and **wins from both**. In such a situation he vacates the seat in one of the two constituencies. The **consequence is that a by-election** would be required from one constituency involving **avoidable labour and expenditure** on the conduct of that by-election.”



- The EC concluded that the “law should be amended to provide that a person **cannot contest from more than one constituency** at a time.”
- The poll body suggested that a candidate should **deposit an amount of ₹ 5 lakh for contesting in two** constituencies in an Assembly election or ₹ 10 lakh in a **general election**.
- This would be **used to conduct a by-election in the eventuality** that he or she is victorious in both constituencies and has to relinquish one.

General Studies-II : Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

1. Adultery must remain a punishable offence: Centre

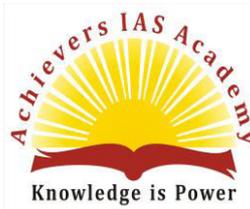
- The government on Wednesday submitted that dropping of adultery as an offence from the Indian Penal Code (IPC) will erode **the sanctity of marriage and be detrimental to the “intrinsic Indian ethos.”**
- The Constitution Bench is scheduled to decide on whether **the pre-Independence provision of adultery** in the IPC treats a married woman as her husband’s “subordinate” and violates the constitutional concepts of **gender equality and sensitivity**. The petition filed by Joseph Shine seeks to drop Section 497 as a **criminal offence** from the statute book.
- A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice Dipak Misra had observed that the provision raised a **question mark on social progress, outlook, gender equality and gender sensitivity**. It was time to bring to the forefront a different view with focus on the **rights of women**, Chief Justice Misra observed.
- The Constitution Bench to be headed by Chief Justice Misra is likely to consider whether **Section 497 treats the man as the adulterer** and the married woman as a **victim**.
- The larger Bench may also examine why the offence of adultery ceases the moment it is established that the husband **connived with or consented to the adulterous act**

2. SC says it is ready to go live, Centre moots a TV channel

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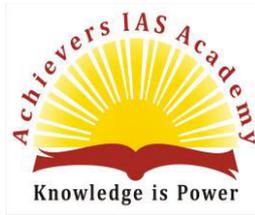
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- The Supreme Court said on Monday that it is ready to go live on camera while the **government mooted a separate TV channel** for live-streaming court proceedings.
- A **three-judge Bench** of Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra and Justices A.M. Khanwilkar and D.Y. Chandrachud said a livestream is only an **extension of the ‘open court’ system**, where the public can walk in and **watch court proceedings**.
- However, with court proceedings beamed live on air, **litigants, law students and the public** can watch them as they happen
- **People from far-flung States** such as Tamil Nadu and Kerala do not have to travel all the way to the national capital for a day’s hearing.
- Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal proposed a **dedicated channel like the Rajya Sabha TV and the Lok Sabha TV** for the Supreme Court. He agreed that a livestream would keep a check **on lawyers’ conduct inside the courtrooms**.
- With the entire country watching them, there would be fewer **interruptions, raised voices and adjournments from the lawyers**.
- He, however, expressed reservations about live-streaming cases involving **national security concerns, matrimonial disputes and rape cases**.
- A public viewing of marital dispute and rape case proceedings would seriously affect justice and amount to a **violation of the fundamental right to privacy**.

‘CJI’s courtroom can go live first’

- The government on Monday told the Supreme Court that **live-streaming of court proceedings** should start with the Chief Justice of India’s courtroom.
- It said live-streaming should be initially restricted **to constitutional issues decided by the top judge**.
- Restricting live-streaming to the CJI’s court would give an opportunity to **gauge public response**, especially when issues of constitutional significance were heard.
- In an earlier hearing, the Supreme Court had said it was ready to go live on camera, while the government had mooted a **separate TV channel** for live-streaming court proceedings.
- The court had referred to live-streaming as **an extension of the “open court” system** allowing the public to walk in and watch the court proceedings.
- Chief Justice Misra had said live-streaming would help litigants **conveniently follow the court proceedings** and assess their lawyers’ performance.
- People from **far-flung States** did not have to travel all the way to the national capital for a day’s hearing. Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal agreed that live-streaming would keep a **check on the lawyers’ conduct**.



3.States obliged to prevent lynchings: CJI

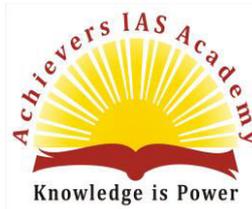
- State governments are obliged to prevent mob lynchings, Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra observed on Tuesday.
- The Supreme Court classified lynchings as **sheer ‘mob violence.’** But it said **compensation for victims** should not be determined solely on the basis of their religion, caste, etc., but on the **basis of the extent of injury** caused as “anyone can be a victim” of such a crime.
- Chief Justice Misra said States **cannot give even the “remotest chance”** to let lynchings happen. “People cannot be allowed to take law into their hands,” Chief Justice Misra observed orally.

Stop spread of fake news, govt. tells WhatsApp

- Amid reports of lynchings across the country over fake messages on WhatsApp, the government said on Tuesday that it had told the service provider “in no uncertain terms” to take **immediate measures** to ensure that its platform was not **misused**.
- He asked the Centre to frame a scheme under Article 256 to give directions to States to prevent/control the instances and maintain law and order.
- Incidents of lynching have been reported in **Assam, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Tripura and West Bengal** by mobs provoked by “**irresponsible and explosive messages**” on WhatsApp.
- “Deep disapproval of such developments has been conveyed to the management of WhatsApp and they have been advised that remedial measures should be taken to **prevent proliferation** of these fake and at times motivated/sensational messages,” the Ministry of Electronics and IT said in a statement.

Make lynching a separate offence, SC tells Parliament

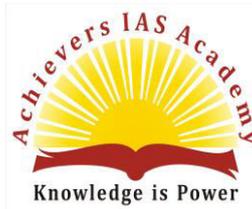
- Asking whether the people of India have lost their **tolerance for one another**, the Supreme Court on Tuesday condemned the recent spate of lynchings as “**horrendous acts of mobocracy**” and told Parliament to make lynching a **separate offence**.



- Describing lynchings and mob violence as “**creeping threats**”, the court warned that the rising wave of frenzied mobs — fed by **fake news, self-professed morality and false stories** — would consume the country like a “**typhoon-like monster.**”
- It said **the primary obligation** of the government is to protect all **individuals irrespective of race, caste, class or religion.** “**Crime knows no religion** and neither the perpetrator nor the victim can be viewed through the lens of race, caste, class or religion,” the court observed.
- It directed several **preventive, remedial and punitive measures** to deal with lynching and mob violence. It ordered the Centre and the States to implement the measures and file compliance reports within the next four weeks. **Lynchings cannot become the order of the day,** the court said.
- The judgment refers to submissions by senior advocate Indira Jaising, for petitioner Tehseen Poonawalla, about self-styled **vigilantes brazenly targeting Dalits and minority community members** in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Delhi.
- The court held that it is **every person’s duty to protect lives and human rights.** No act of a citizen is to be adjudged by any kind of community under the **guise of protectors of law.**
- The **government cannot allow self-styled vigilantes** to take over from law enforcement agencies.
- Any “**external forces**” who assume the role of protectors are **criminals**

Passing the buck

- Political messaging and administrative alerts are key to stopping the string of lynchings
- The Central government has finally moved to react to the lynchings reported from across the length and breadth of the country, but **its line of action is bafflingly weak.**
- Over the past couple of months, **mobs have materialised** to beat to kill people they suspect — almost always without basis — of plotting to kidnap children to **harvest their organs.**
- Warnings to beware of child kidnappers, sometimes with the rider that they are likely to **hail from other parts of India,** are mostly circulated on **WhatsApp, the Facebook-owned encrypted messaging platform.**
- Since a cluster of such killings in Tamil Nadu in May, deaths have been reported from States as far apart as **Assam, Karnataka and Maharashtra.**



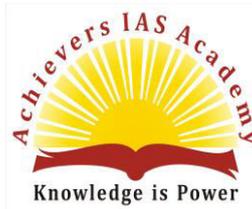
- In one recent attack, five people were clobbered to death in Maharashtra's Dhule's district on child-lifting rumours; the mob numbering hundreds overpowered the few policemen present.
- And **ironically**, among three people lynched in **Tripura** on a single day, June 28, was a man hired by the State government to **spread awareness against precisely such rumours**.
- Now, the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology has told **WhatsApp to take "remedial measures... to prevent proliferation of these fake and at times motivated/sensational messages"**.
- WhatsApp is the **communication platform of choice** in the age of cheap smartphones. One of the USPs of the platform is that the messages are **encrypted in a manner** that makes it impossible for them to be read.
- Given this, it is not clear **how such a platform can take measures** to limit the spread of motivated or sensational messages.
- Also, whether such checks would amount to **legitimising surveillance** and a loss of **privacy** — a rare commodity in this digital age. Even if it can do so without compromising privacy, the **problem is not the medium**.
- **Rumour** has historically found its way around communication walls, and it can only be effectively **blocked through old-fashioned information campaigns and administrative alertness**.
- Rumour's potency predates mobile phones, even if there is no denying that **smartphones**, with their ability **to instantly transmit text and images**, have a tendency, in this era of fake news, to **rapidly spread panic and anger**.
- This happens in different ways across the world, but in India the problem has assumed truly **distressing proportions**.
- It is well-known that an **unrelated video of an act of violence** that went viral was responsible for fuelling communal hatred in **Muzaffarnagar** in 2013.
- It is puzzling **that district administrations and gram panchayats** have not been asked to reach out to locals to **persuade** them against falling for rumours, and to come to the authorities if they have any fears.
- The messaging needs to be amplified — merely **appealing to WhatsApp is hardly the solution**.

4.SC questions female genital mutilation

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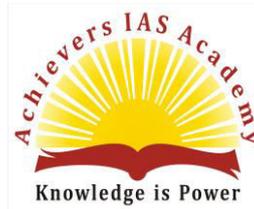


- No one can violate the **integrity and the bodily privacy of a woman** in the name of religion, the Supreme Court observed on Monday.
- The observation, from a Bench led by Chief Justice Dipak Misra, came after the **Centre condemned the practice of female genital mutilation** performed by some communities on children as a **religious practice**.
- Chief Justice Misra said such practices on children was an offence under the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act**.

General Studies-II : Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries Parliament and State Legislatures - structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

1. Court seeks response on FCRA amendments

- The Supreme Court on Monday sought a response from the government on amendments made in the **Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA)** which benefit the ruling BJP and the Opposition Congress, both held **guilty by the Delhi High Court** in 2014 for receiving foreign funds from two subsidiaries of **Vedanta, a U.K.-based company**.
- The amendments were passed as a **Money Bill with retrospective effect** from the year 1976.
- The petition, represented by advocates Prashant Bhushan and Neha Rathi, contended the amendments were made to **counter** a March 28, 2014 **decision of the Delhi High Court**.
- The High Court had held the two major national political parties — the BJP and the Congress — **guilty of taking foreign funding**.
- It had directed the **Centre and the Election Commission of India to take action** against the two parties within six months.
- The **Representation of the People Act bars** political parties from receiving **foreign funds**. T
- he petition argued that the “amendments have opened doors to **unlimited political donations from foreign companies** and thereby legitimising financial contributions received from foreign sources”.

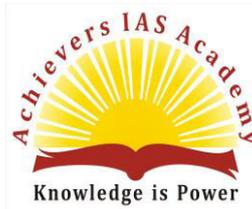


- The amendments, the petition said, was also against the “settled principle of separation of powers since it has **overruled the Delhi High Court judgment**”.

General Studies-II : Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

1.Tackling HIV

- India has **brought down HIV incidence**, but it must do more in removing **social stigma**
- A new report from the Joint **United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)** bears good news for the global war against the syndrome.
- Between 2010 and 2017, **several countries made rapid progress** in reducing HIV incidence and getting **antiretroviral therapy** to patients.
- Today, three out of four people with HIV **know their status**, and 21.7 million **get treatment**. While the largest reduction in incidence came from eastern and **southern Africa, Asia also made gains**.
- India, in particular, **brought down the number of new cases and deaths** by 27% and 56%, respectively, between 2010 and 2017. As the UNAIDS report says, some satisfaction is warranted.
- This applies also to India, which has done a few things right. For example, **tuberculosis is the biggest killer of HIV patients** across the world. India is now **able to treat over 90% of notified TB patients** for HIV.
- **Social stigma** surrounding AIDS-infected people in India, while high, is **declining slowly too**.
- Survey data show that in the last decade, the **number of people unwilling to buy vegetables** from a person with HIV came down from over 30% to 27.6%. But even as India celebrates such progress, it is important to be mindful of the **scale of the challenge**.
- With 2.1 million cases, India is **among the largest burden countries** in the world. And there are critical gaps in its strategy.
- The **UNAIDS report** points out that a country’s **laws can legitimise stigma and give licence** to the harassment of groups at the highest risk of HIV.
- These **include men who have sex with other men, people who inject drugs, and sex workers**. Indian laws don’t do well on this count.
- The **Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act criminalises several aspects** of sex work, while **Section 377** of the IPC criminalises gay sex. Studies show that fear of



prosecution under such laws prevents homosexual men, drug-users and sex workers from seeking HIV screening and treatment.

- As a result, these groups **lag behind average treatment rates**, although their requirements are higher.
- According to a 2017 UNAIDS report, for example, awareness of their HIV status among men who have sex with other men was 41% in India; 52% of those who knew their status were receiving treatment, and of these, 83% had **suppressed viral levels**. These are troubling patterns.
- If India is serious about tackling HIV, it must **find ways to reach such groups**. Short of changing the law, the Centre can **consider targeted interventions**.
- An experiment in **Karnataka**, between 2004 and 2011, finds favourable mention in the report.
- It shows that **sensitising police personnel** and **educating female sex workers** can greatly **reduce arbitrary police raids and arrests**.
- As the UNAIDS report emphasises, **the right to health is universal**. India must take note of this to ensure that no one is left behind in the fight against HIV.

2. Medical tourists flocking to India

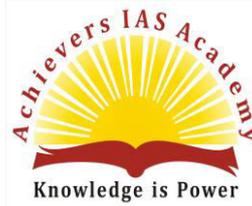
- A rare combination of **advanced facilities, skilled doctors, and low cost** of treatment has made India a popular hub of medical tourism, attracting a large number of foreign patients every year.
- The total number of such visitors in 2017 was 4.95 lakh, Minister of State for Tourism (Independent Charge) K.J. Alphons, said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha.
- This number had stood at around 2.34 lakh in 2015, and 4.27 lakh in 2016.
- **Bangladesh and Afghanistan** continued to be the top countries from where the maximum number foreign tourist arrivals (for medical purpose) was seen.
- In 2017, about 2.21 lakh tourists from Bangladesh are estimated to have come to India for medical reasons, compared to 1.20 lakh in 2015 and 2.10 lakh in 2016.
- **Other countries** from where large numbers of medical tourists came to India include Iraq, Oman, Maldives, Yemen, Uzbekistan and Sudan.
- **The NITI Aayog** has identified medical value travel as a **major source of foreign exchange earnings**.

3.A fishy matter

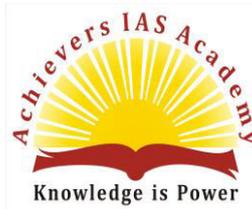
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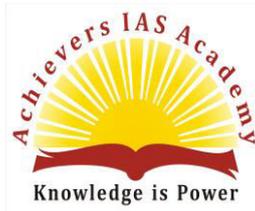
- Concerns over formaldehyde contamination of fish need to be addressed — scientifically
- Reports of traces of the chemical formaldehyde in fish in several States highlight both the **uncertainties of science**, and the importance of clear **risk-communication**. In June, the Kerala government found formaldehyde-laced fish being transported into the State.
- Soon after, The Hindu carried out a joint investigation with the Tamil Nadu Dr. J. Jayalalithaa Fisheries University to look for formaldehyde in Chennai.
- The study revealed around 5-20 ppm of the chemical in **freshwater and marine fish** in two of the city's markets.
- Next, **Goa reported similar findings**. But its Food and Drugs Administration later said the levels in Goan samples were **on a par with “naturally occurring”** formaldehyde in marine fish.
- This triggered suspicions among residents, who accused the government of playing down the health risk.
- The **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India** has **banned** formaldehyde in **fresh fish**, while the International Agency for Research on Cancer labelled the chemical a **carcinogen** in 2004.
- The evidence the IARC relied on mainly consists of studies on workers in industries such as **printing, textiles and embalming**.
- Such workers inhale formaldehyde fumes, and the studies show high rates of **nasopharyngeal and other cancers** among them.
- But there is **little evidence** that formaldehyde causes cancer when ingested orally. A 1990 study by U.S. researchers estimated that humans consume 11 mg of the chemical through **dietary sources every day**.
- So, why is formaldehyde in fish a problem? For one thing, **fresh fish should not have preservatives**, and the presence of formaldehyde points to unscrupulous vendors trying to pass off **stale catch** as recent.
- Two, the lack of evidence linking ingested formaldehyde with cancer **doesn't necessarily make the chemical safe**.
- At high doses, it causes **gastric irritation**. Plus, the lack of data could merely mean that not enough people are consuming formaldehyde **regularly enough for its carcinogenic effects to show** — the absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.
- There is a third complication. When certain marine fish are improperly frozen during transit, **formaldehyde forms in them naturally**. But this formaldehyde binds to the tissue, unlike added formaldehyde, which remains free.



- And so, measuring free formaldehyde versus bound formaldehyde can be one way of **distinguishing a contaminant from a naturally occurring** chemical. In this context, the Goan government must clarify its claim.
- Did the Goan FDA measure **free formaldehyde or bound formaldehyde**? If it measured the sum of both, on what basis did it conclude that the chemical came from natural sources? Some formaldehyde consumption may be **unavoidable for fish-lovers**, and it may **not be a health risk either**.
- But the **line between safe and unsafe consumption** should be drawn by experts, in a transparent manner. The Goan claim doesn't meet this criterion. This is why, instead of allaying the fears of consumers, it is **stoking them**.

4. Create leprosy awareness: SC

- The Supreme Court on Thursday directed the government to constitute a **separate wing devoted to create and extend public awareness** that leprosy is **curable and not contagious**.
- A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra ordered All India Radio and Doordarshan to **air programmes nationally** as well as **regionally** in the States.
- Chief Justice Misra said it was the “**primary duty of the state** to erase the **stigma against those suffering** from leprosy and nudge them back into the mainstream.”
- The Chief Justice said there had to be “**social awakening**” to the fact that leprosy was curable and not contagious, considering the advance made in modern medical science. Afflicted persons could not be exposed to stigma which denuded them of **basic human dignity**.
- Persons suffering from leprosy deserved the **empathy from authorities** as well as the **society at large**. They deserved to be treated with **equality**, the Chief Justice noted.
- Earlier, the court had asked the Centre and the States to **remove references to leprosy as a disability from statute books**. It had noted that references to leprosy as a disability amounted to “**statutory stigma**.”
- Stressing the need for **awareness campaign right up to the ‘gram panchayat’ level**, the Bench said such measures would eventually help in eradicating the disease **and ending ‘discrimination’ of sufferers**.



5.Nipah outbreak from fruit bats, says ICMR

- The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has confirmed that fruit bats were the **primary source** of the Nipah outbreak in Kozhikode and Malappuram districts, where 17 people died due to the virus earlier this year.
- Initially, a Central medical team **had ruled out bats as the primary source** of the infection after samples collected from bats in two Kerala districts tested negative.
- Later, another medical team, in its report to the Union Health Ministry, said bats could not be ruled out as the samples were collected from **insectivorous bats**, which were not known to be Nipah carriers. In the second round, samples from **55 fruit bats** were collected and sent to the National Institute of Virology in Pune.
- An ICMR official said the samples from fruit bats **tested positive for the virus**.

6.Survey launched to rank States on rural cleanliness

- The Centre has launched the **Swachh Survekshan Grameen, 2018**, a nationwide survey of rural India to rank the **cleanest and dirtiest States** and districts on the basis of **qualitative and quantitative evaluation**.
- A **random selection of 6, 980 villages** across 698 districts will surveyed during the month of August, following which the Swachh Survekshan Grameen awards are expected to be announced in time for Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary on **October 2**.
- This is the **first comprehensive survey for rural India**, which has been launched after **three successful editions** of a similar survey in **urban India**
- The rankings will be based on three basic parameters: **direct observation** of public places by independent surveyors, **service-level progress** using data from the Swachh Bharat Mission's **information system and citizens' feedback**.
- The feedback will be solicited through village meetings, online feedback and **direct interviews**, as well as **discussions** with key influencers such as local officials, elected representatives and anganwadi workers, said Mr. Iyer.
- An **audio-visual publicity campaign**, featuring Swachh Bharat ambassadors Amitabh Bachchan and Sachin Tendulkar, was also launched.

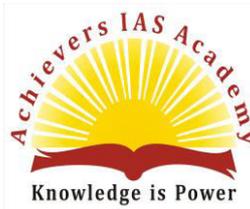
7.Detention no cure

- The amendment to the Right to Education Act will only undermine its intent

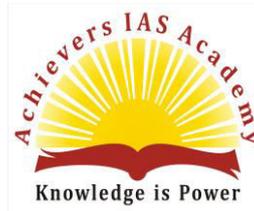
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- The **legislation to amend the Right to Education Act** to give States the **power to detain students** who fail an examination in Class 5 or 8 is a negative measure.
- Although **many States want such a change**, the amendment passed by the Lok Sabha goes against the view of many educationists, who argue that it would **weaken one of the progressive features of the RTE Act**, which is to guarantee the **continued presence** of the child in school during the formative learning phase.
- The proposed change will allow State Boards to **declare a student failed and detain her** on the basis of an examination, although Section 30(1) of the RTE Act holds out the assurance that no child shall be required to face any Board examination till **completion of elementary education**.
- There are **genuine concerns** on learning outcomes produced by India's schooling system.
- But these are determined not only by a student's effort but also by the **number and quality of teachers**, processes for continuous assessment and, crucially, **active engagement** of parents and the community in encouraging excellence.
- It is the lack of attention to some of these determinants that has created what Human Resource Development Minister Prakash Javadekar calls a **"broken" school education system**.
- Detaining already disadvantaged children can only break it further, and render the RTE Act a dead letter.
- The case to replace the no-detention provision with one that **reintroduces examinations in grades 3, 5 and 8** was made by a **sub-committee** of the Central Advisory Board of Education set up to review the provision, but its assumptions were faulty.
- For one, it concluded that the crucial guarantee could be implemented **only under ideal conditions**, and these were not available, while the pioneering **RTE Act wanted to extend it to all grades** within its purview.
- Yet, the provision is central to the objects of the law, since it seeks to check dropouts and enable all children to attend school in order to derive benefits that **go beyond rote-learning**.
- In fact, in 2016 the **NITI Aayog** found, based on a study in Punjab, that bringing back detention in elementary schooling would increase the **dropout rate**, impacting the **poor and Dalits** the most as they depended on government institutions.
- Besides, the proposed 'cure' may make another problem worse: when **parents are unable to ensure regular attendance** of children due to social circumstances, it is inconceivable that detaining them for non-performance will act as **an incentive to attend school regularly**.



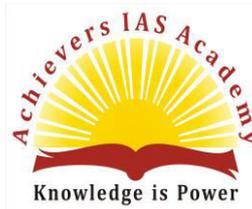
- The move to introduce examinations as filters has not been fully thought through, and may be a **hasty response to demands from State** governments which want to be seen as acting firmly in favour of quality.
- Tinkering with the RTE Act without sufficient thought will **erode a major constitutional achievement**.

8.Samagra Shiksha - An Integrated Scheme to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education at all levels of school education.

- The Government of India has launched Samagra Shiksha - An Integrated Scheme for school education, w.e.f. 2018-19, which is **an overarching programme for the school education** sector extending **from pre-school to class XII** and aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education **at all levels of school education**.
- It envisages the 'school' as a **continuum** from pre-school, primary, upper primary, secondary to senior secondary levels **and subsumes the three erstwhile centrally sponsored schemes** i.e. Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education(TE).
- Bridging **gender and social category gaps** at all levels of school education is one of the major objectives of the scheme.
- The scheme **reaches out to girls and children** belonging to Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST), minority communities and transgender.

9.Conferring eminence

- Raising the **quality of higher education** across the board should be a priority
- In its report on higher education for the **Twelfth Plan**, the working group of the erstwhile Planning Commission **identified expansion, inclusion and excellence as the three pillars for growth**.
- The NDA government had the theme of excellence in its 2016 annual budget, with a proposal to make **10 institutions each in the public and private sectors globally competitive**.
- The challenge of excellence is to develop **liberal institutions** founded on academic **rigour, high scholarship and equitable access** for all classes of students.
- Quite ambitiously, the **Ministry of Human Resource Development** has taken the decision to give **Institution of Eminence (IoE)** status to six institutes, **three each from the public and private sectors**.



- Potentially, this will help the **select few rise above the many** State, Central and private universities, national-level institutes of technology, **science, management and humanities, and attract talent.**
- While it is a creditable achievement, the recognition **raises the bar for the chosen few**: the IITs at Mumbai and Delhi and the IISc in the public category, and BITS Pilani and the Manipal Academy of Higher Education, which are private.
- Giving the tag to **Jio Institute**, which is yet to come up, generated **understandable controversy.**
- It should be ensured that this **conditional recognition is fulfilled transparently**, and that it meets the requirements on governance structure, infrastructure and faculty within three years.
- The idea of developing centres of higher learning advances the Nehruvian vision of building **‘temples of modern India’.**
- The IoEs can become models of **autonomy, academic innovation and equity of access**, and lead to a **transformation** of higher education.
- That there is **need for urgent reform** became clear during the selection process: the empowered committee found that State universities had a low output because some of them had **several faculty members recruited on contract basis, with no incentive to do research.**
- Such **ad hocism must end**, and public universities should be insulated from **political pressures.** **Vice-chancellors** should be appointed on merit, **free of ideological biases.**
- With good governance structures and significant new financial grants, the selected public institutions will be able to **innovate on courses and encourage research.**
- The growth of these and other national institutions will also depend on policies to **raise the expenditure on R&D** as a percentage of GDP.
- Among countries with a comparable research output, India with 0.8% R&D spending trails Russia, Brazil, South Korea and even Singapore, according to **Unesco data.**
- Islands of eminence can inspire, but the **long-term goal should be to raise the quality of higher education** in all institutions through academic reform. The quality is uneven, and at the bottom levels, abysmal.
- At the same time, **initiatives by charitable trusts** — which have declined due to political support for commercialisation and aid cuts — **must be welcomed**, as this would help open more **affordable colleges and universities.**

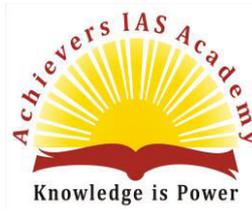
10.The measure of tests

- Allowing students to take JEE and NEET twice a year is logical

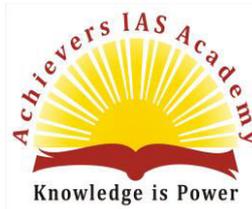
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- In an **ideal system**, admission to higher education courses would be based on assessment of **aptitude and suitability**, and a testing process that is **transparent, accessible and fair**.
- India's policymakers have struggled to create a **credible national admissions apparatus** for professional degree programmes that accommodates the **diversity and plurality of the country**.
- The two-level Joint Entrance Examination (**JEE**) for admission to technological institutes such as the **IITs, NITs and IIITs**, and the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (**NEET**) for undergraduate medical courses are steps in this direction — although much work remains to be done to make them accessible, especially **for rural students who suffer from various handicaps**, not the least of which is a shaky school education system.
- Viewed against this background, the decision of the Centre to form a **National Testing Agency** to conduct these and some other examinations is a progressive move.
- A professional agency would look at nothing other than the **suitability of the candidate** to pursue a particular programme.
- Of course, there will be those that contend that the **better-run States could have their own agencies** perform the same task, but the expertise of a **national agency is preferable**.
- The objective of aptitude testing in a populous country should be to **enable mobility, and access to courses** offered in any State.
- **Peer-reviewed standards and curbs on commercialisation** can help expand higher education. In the case of medical courses, a common test such as NEET should make it possible to attend any of about 350 medical colleges, of which 175 are run by private entities.
- The idea of **multiple opportunities** to take a test in a single year, which the Centre has now adopted for JEE (Main) and NEET, is not really new, and is familiar to students **entering universities abroad**, particularly those in the United States.
- In fact, the **Ashok Misra committee** set up by the Human Resource Development Ministry to review the JEE three years ago recommended that an online aptitude test be **offered two or more times a year**.
- The move to make both JEE (Main) and NEET available twice a year is consistent with that advice.
- However, a **computer-based test should not turn into a barrier** for students from rural backgrounds, and **impose additional expenditure** on candidates for preparation, travel to a testing centre and so on.



- The reservations about online testing on such grounds should be overcome with **good planning and allocation of sufficient funds**.
- Equally important is the issue of **regulation of coaching institutes** — a sector worth about ₹24,000 crore a year, according to the Ashok Misra panel — in order to ensure that the changes **do not result in further exploitation of students**.
- Ultimately, any process of **reform at the level of entrance examinations** can be meaningful only if the **school education system is revamped**, and **learning outcomes are improved**.

11. 'No decision on shifting UGC's powers'

- The Centre on Monday said that no decision had been taken yet to shift the University Grants Commission's **grant-giving powers** to the **Ministry of Human Resource Development**.
- It, however, agreed that **many committees had suggested** the separation of regulation and grants, and added that the proposed new system would be **purely merit-based, online and objective**.
- This comes days after the Ministry put a draft Bill, to create a **Higher Education Commission of India** and repeal the UGC, in the public domain for suggestions.

General Studies-II : Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

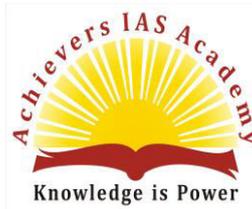
1. Protect critical personal data of citizens: draft Bill

 <p>Safeguarding data A look at definitions of personal data and the right to be forgotten as per the draft bill</p>	<p>WHAT IS PERSONAL DATA?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Data relating to a natural person who is directly or indirectly identifiable, having regard to any characteristic, trait, attribute or any other feature of the identity of such natural person, or any combination of such features, or any combination of such features with any other information	<p>THE RIGHT TO BE FORGOTTEN</p> <p>As per the B.N.Srikrishna Committee report on data privacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ The right to be forgotten refers to the ability of individuals to limit, de-link, delete, or correct the disclosure of personal information on the internet that is misleading, embarrassing, irrelevant, or anachronistic■ Such disclosure may or may not be a consequence of unlawful processing by the data fiduciary. This is because the right flows from the general obligation of data fiduciaries to not only process lawfully, but also in a manner that is fair and reasonable
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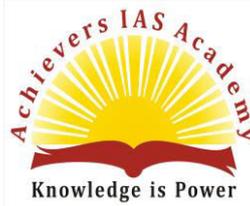
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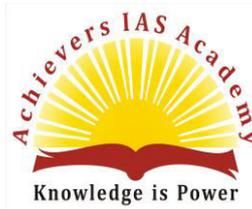
- The draft personal data protection Bill, 2018, submitted by the Justice **B.N. Srikrishna-headed expert panel** on Friday, has proposed that critical personal data of Indian citizens **be processed in centres located within the country.**
- The draft law, which comes after a **year-long consultation process**, however, has left it to the government to **notify categories of personal data that will be considered critical.**
- **Other personal data may be transferred outside the territory** of India with some riders. However, **at least one copy of the data** will need to be stored in India.
- The draft Bill, which India hopes will become **a model framework for personal data protection for the world**, will apply to processing of personal data within India, including the State.
- For data processors not present in India, the Act will apply to those carrying on business in India or other activities, **such as profiling**, which could cause privacy harms to **data principals in India.**
- The draft also provides **for penalties for the data processor** as well as compensation to the data principal to be imposed for **violations of the data protection law.**
- It has suggested a **penalty of ₹15 crore, or 4% of the total worldwide** turnover of any data collection/processing entity, for violating provisions. **Failure to take prompt action** on a data security breach can attract up to ₹5 crore or 2% of turnover in penalty.
- **Personal data**, the draft law states, **may be processed on the basis of the consent of the data principal**, given no later than at the commencement of the processing
- . It added that processing of sensitive personal data should be on the basis of **“explicit consent.”**
- The law, the committee said, **will not have retrospective application** and will come into force in a **structured and phased manner.** “Processing that is ongoing after the coming into force of the law would be covered.”
- Justice Srikrishna stated that this report is the **first step towards data protection** and as technology changes, it may become necessary to fine-tune the law.
- The draft Bill, which has recommended that a **Data Protection Authority** be set up to prevent misuse of personal information, also provides for setting up an Appellate Tribunal.
- **On right to be forgotten**, the draft states that **data principal will have the right to restrict** or prevent continuing disclosure of personal data by a data processor.
- It has recommended that processing of data for certain interests such as **security of the state, legal proceedings, research and journalistic purpose**, may be exempt from certain obligations of the proposed data protection law.



- The bill seeks to strike a **balance between freedom of expression and right to informational privacy**, the data protection law would need to signal what the term ‘**journalistic purposes**’ signifies, and how ethical standards for such activities would need to be set
- The Justice Srikrishna committee on data privacy has made specific mention of the need for **separate and more stringent norms for protecting** the data of **children**, recommending that companies be barred from certain types of data processing such as **behavioural monitoring, tracking, targeted advertising** and any other type of processing which is not in the best interest of the child
- The committee noted that, at present, there **were two types of entities processing** the personal data of children. The first type were services offered primarily to children, such as **YouTube Kids, Hot Wheels** and Walt Disney, and the second were social media services such as **Facebook and Instagram**.
- The committee recommends that the Data Protection Authority will have the power to **designate websites or online services that process** large volumes of personal data of children as “**guardian data fiduciaries**”.
- The committee noted that this approach, of placing **the onus of properly processing the data of a child** on the company, is preferable to the existing regulatory approach which is based **solely on a system of parental consent**.

A good beginning

- The data protection bill drafted by the Srikrishna panel ticks many boxes
- Given the **vast amounts of personal data being collected by private companies and state agencies**, and their flow across national jurisdictions, the absence of a data protection legal framework in India has been a cause for deep concern.
- This is even more so because in many cases individuals whose data have been used and processed by agencies, both private firms and state entities, are **oblivious to the purpose for which they are being harnessed**.
- The need for legislation was also underlined last year with the landmark judgment in **Justice K.S Puttaswamy v. Union of India** that held the **right to privacy to be a fundamental right**.
- Against this backdrop, the draft legislation on data protection submitted by a committee of experts chaired by Justice B.N. Srikrishna to the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology after year-long public consultations provides a **sound foundation** on which to speedily build India’s legal framework.



- It seeks to **codify the relationship between individuals and firms/state institutions** as one between “**data principals**” (whose information is collected) and “**data fiduciaries**” (those processing the data) so that privacy is safeguarded by design.
- This is akin to a contractual relationship that places obligations on the entities entrusted with data and who are obligated **to seek the consent of the “principal”** for the use of personal information.
- The draft legislation puts the onus on the “data fiduciary” to seek clear, **informed, specific and free consent**, with the possibility of withdrawal of data of the “principal” to allow for the use and processing of “sensitive personal data”.
- In many ways, the draft legislation mirrors the **General Data Protection Regulation**, the framework on data protection implemented in the European Union this May, in providing for “data principals” the rights to confirmation, correction of data, portability and “**to be forgotten**”, subject to procedure.
- It envisages the creation of a regulatory **Data Protection Authority** of India to protect the interests of “principals” and to monitor the implementation of the provisions of the enabling data protection legislation.
- Taken together, the draft bill and the report mark a welcome step forward, but there are some **grey areas**.
- The **exemptions granted to state institutions** from acquiring informed consent from principals or processing personal data in many cases appear to be too blanket, such as those **pertaining to the “security of the state”**. These are hold-all phrases, and checks are vital.
- The report recommends a law to provide for “**parliamentary oversight and judicial approval** of non-consensual access to personal data”.

Without such an enabling law, the exemptions provided in the bill will fall short of securing accountability from the state for activities such as **dragnet surveillance**. The grey areas must spark public and parliamentary debate before a final legislation comes to fruition

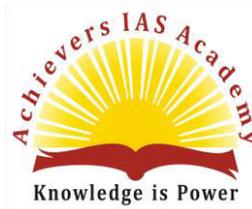
2.Lok Sabha clears amendment Bill

INSULATING PUBLIC SERVANTS: Lowdown on the significant changes in the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988, adopted by both Houses of Parliament				
 Bribery What is new <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Giving a bribe is now an offence, punishable by a 7-year prison term ▪ Except when one is forced to give a bribe. But it should be reported within seven days ▪ Bribe is termed 'undue advantage', defined as 'gratification other than legal remuneration' What it was <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No specific provision, except as abetment <p style="font-size: small; background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 2px;">It could empower the public to refuse to give a bribe but seven-day limit may not be enough. As to what happens if citizen's report of coercion is not registered by the police is unclear</p>	 Pre-investigation approval What is new <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Police officer cannot begin probe without prior approval of relevant authority or govt (except when caught red-handed) What it was <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No such provision in the Act, but a rule similar to it was struck down by Supreme Court <p style="font-size: small; background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 2px;">Protection formerly available to officials of rank of joint secretary and above (before SC struck it down) is extended to all public servants</p>	 Sanction for prosecution What is new <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sanction needed for prosecuting former officials for offences done while in office ▪ Centre may notify guidelines for sanction ▪ Decision on request for sanction within 3 months, which may be extended by a month* What it was <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sanction was required under PCA for serving officers only <p style="font-size: small; background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 2px;">Sanction for IPC offences covered both serving and retired officers. Guidelines and time-limit may help make sanction process easier</p>	 Criminal misconduct What is new <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Only be two forms of criminal misconduct. ▪ Misappropriation of property entrusted to public servant ▪ Intentionally enriching oneself illicitly What it was <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There were five kinds: omitted ones are taking bribe habitually, getting anything free or at a concession, obtaining pecuniary advantage for oneself or for another without public interest <p style="font-size: small; background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 2px;">This is to protect public servants from being wrongly prosecuted for official decisions. Earlier it was a crime to "obtain advantage to a private party without public interest"</p>	 Forfeiture of property What is new <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Section introduced for Special Court under this Act to attach and confiscate property What it was <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This was not done under the Prevention of Corruption Act, but under a 1944 ordinance through civil courts <p style="font-size: small; background-color: #e0e0e0; padding: 2px;">This helps avoid a fresh procedure to confiscate property obtained through corruption, enables court conducting trial to do so itself</p>

- The Lok Sabha on Tuesday passed the **Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2018**, that seeks to **punish bribe-givers and bribe-takers**.
- The Bill provides for a **jail term** of three to seven years, besides a **fine**, to those convicted of taking bribes and those giving bribes to public officials.
- It extends the **ambit of public servants who would be protected** by sanction from prosecution.
- The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill last week.
- There is also a provision now to get **prior permission for starting an investigation** and that has prompted many to say that the law has been "**diluted**" from its original draft.
- He said safeguards had been provided to **ensure that honest officers** were not intimidated by false complaints
- In a departure from the earlier anti-corruption law, the current law makes a **distinction between "collusive bribe givers"** and those who are "coerced." In such cases, the Bill seeks to **protect those who report the matter within seven days**.

3.Fugitive offenders Bill passed

- The Lok Sabha on Wednesday passed the Fugitive Economic Offenders Bill, which will now **replace the ordinance** by the same name promulgated by the President in April.
- The Bill empowers **special courts** to direct the Central government to **confiscate all the assets** belonging to a fugitive economic offender, including those assets that are **proceeds of the crime and that do not belong to the offender**.
- The legislation gains importance against the backdrop of **high-profile cases** where individuals such as Vijay Mallya and Nirav Modi escaped the country.



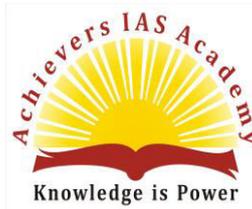
- The **Opposition** raised several objections to the Bill, including that it did not do any more than what's already provided for by the existing laws, that the **₹100-crore limit** above which the law becomes applicable was untenable, and that the provision in the Bill **disqualifying a fugitive economic offender from availing** the Indian judicial system for civil cases was **unconstitutional**.
- Offenders below that limit will continue to be tackled by the existing various laws and courts.

4.Lok Sabha passes anti-trafficking Bill

- The Bill lays down a **stringent punishment of 10 years** to life imprisonment for aggravated forms of trafficking, which **include buying or selling of persons for the purpose of bonded labour**, bearing a child, as well as those where **chemical substances are administered**, and a survivor acquires **life-threatening illnesses such as AIDS**.
- The Bill proposes establishing a National Anti-Trafficking Bureau (NATB) for **coordinating and monitoring** of trafficking cases.
- It also provides for a **Relief and Rehabilitation Committee** and Rehabilitation Fund with an initial allocation of ₹ 10 crore. It
- It prescribes **forfeiture of property** used or likely to be used for the commission of an offence.

5.Overdue correction

- A relook at the overly harsh provisions of the **Companies Act** must yield action
- The Centre has announced the **constitution of a committee** to revisit several provisions of the Companies Act, 2013 **that impose stiff penalties and, in some cases, prison terms** as well, for directors and key management personnel.
- The 2013 law entailed the first **massive overhaul** of India's legal regime to govern businesses that had been in place since 1956 and was borne of a long-drawn consultative process.
- Now, this 10-member committee appointed by the **Corporate Affairs Ministry** has been tasked with checking if certain offences can be **'de-criminalised'**.
- The panel, which includes top banker **Uday Kotak**, has been given 30 days to work out whether some of the violations that can attract imprisonment (such as a **clerical failure by directors to make adequate disclosures** about their interests) may instead be punished with monetary fines.

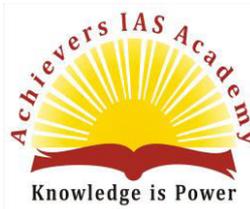


- It will also examine if offences punishable with a fine or imprisonment may be re-categorised as ‘acts’ that attract **civil liabilities**.
- Importantly, the committee has also been asked to suggest **the broad contours for an adjudicatory mechanism** that allows penalties to be levied for **minor violations**, perhaps in an automated manner, with **minimal discretion available to officials**.
- In fact, some of the provisions in the law are so tough that even **a spelling mistake or typographical error** could be construed as a fraud and lead to **harsh strictures**.
- The government hopes such changes in the regulatory regime would allow trial courts to devote greater attention to **serious offences** rather than get overloaded with cases as zealous officials **blindly pursue prosecutions for even minor violations**.
- The decision to build in harsh penalties and prison terms for corporate misdemeanours in the **2013 law** was, no doubt, influenced by the high-pitched **anti-corruption discourse** that prevailed in the country at that moment in time.
- Apart from several cases of **crony capitalism** that had come to light during the second UPA government, massive corporate frauds reported at once-revered firms such as the erstwhile **Satyam Computer Services** had spooked investors and other stakeholders about the credibility of corporate India’s books and governance standards.
- When the NDA came to power in May 2014, a comprehensive review of the Companies Act was at the **top of industry’s wish list** as a means to revive the economy.
- Industry captains had red-flagged the impact of such provisions on the **ease of doing business, and investor sentiment in general**.
- A trust deficit between industry and government owing to stray incidents of **corporate malfeasance should not inhibit normal business** operations, they had argued.
- Four years down the line, the government is finally moving purposefully on this, a rethink perhaps triggered by the fact **that private sector investment is yet to pick up steam** and capital still seeks foreign shores to **avoid regulatory risks**.
- One hopes this is followed up on swiftly, before the ruling party slips into **election mode**.

General Studies-II : Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.

1.SC pulls up Centre for its delay in appointing a Lokpal

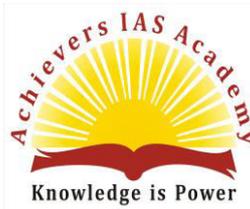
- The Supreme Court on Tuesday said the government’s stand on completing the appointment of the Lokpal, an **ombudsman to protect the common man from corruption** in public service and power centres, is “wholly unsatisfactory.”



- The court was reacting to an affidavit filed by the government, aiming to **specify the exact time frame** by which it would appoint a Lokpal
- The eight-page affidavit said the **Selection Committee**, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, met on July 19 on the choice of a **Search Committee** for the Lokpal. This Search Committee would prepare a panel of names.
- On July 19, the Selection Committee discussed that the Search Committee would **comprise seven persons**, including the Chairperson.
- These persons have to be from **expertise as diverse** as anti-corruption policy, public administration, insurance, banking, law and management.
- Besides, **50% of them should be drawn from the SC/ST category**, the OBCs, the minorities and women. The selection panel decided to discuss this further the next time it meets at a convenient time.
- Though passed in 2014, the **Lokpal and Lokayukta Act of 2013** was not implemented all these years because there was **no Leader of Opposition (LoP)** in the 16th Lok Sabha. The 2013 statute includes the LoP as a member of the selection committee.
- The Act intends the LoP to be the part of the **selection committee of the PM, the CJI and the Speaker**, which has to first appoint an eminent jurist among their ranks.
- However, on April 27 last year, the Supreme Court, in a judgment, clarified that the Lokpal appointment process **need not be stalled merely due to the absence of the LoP**.
- The judgment had dismissed the government's reasoning that the Lokpal appointment process should wait till the **2013 Act was amended to replace the LoP** with the single largest opposition party leader.

2. Allow gambling in sports but regulate it, says law panel

- The **Law Commission** of India on Thursday submitted a report to the government, saying that since it is impossible to stop illegal gambling, the **only viable option left is to “regulate” gambling in sports**.
- The Commission, headed by former Supreme Court judge B.S. Chauhan, recommended **“cashless” gambling in sports** as a means to increase revenue and deal a **blow to unlawful gambling**.
- The money generated **can be used for public welfare measures**, it said. For that, the revenue from gambling should be **taxable under laws** such as the **Income Tax Act and the Goods and Services Tax Act**.



- Transactions between gamblers and operators should be **linked to their Aadhaar and PAN cards** so that the government could keep an eye on them, it said.
- The Commission recommended a classification of **‘proper gambling’ and ‘small gambling.’** Proper gambling would be for the **rich** who play for high stakes, while small gambling would be for the **low-income groups.**
- The panel wanted the government to introduce a **cap on the number of gambling transactions for each individual:** monthly, half-yearly and annual.
- **Restrictions on the amount** should be prescribed while using electronic money facilities such as credit cards, debit cards and net-banking. Gambling websites **should not solicit pornography,** it said.
- The Commission said regulations **should protect vulnerable groups, minors and those below the poverty line,** those who draw their sustenance from social welfare measures, subsidies and Jan Dhan account-holders from exploitation through gambling.
- According to the Commission, **foreign exchange management and foreign direct investment laws** and policies should be amended to encourage investment in the **casino/online gaming industry.** This would propel tourism and employment, it said.
- However, **one of the members,** Prof. S. Sivakumar, expressed strong **dissent** in a separate note filed with the government. He said the Law Commission’s report was **not “comprehensive.”**
- A **country as poor as India should not allow ‘legalised gambling.’** He said such a move would leave the poor poorer, and **only vested interests** want legalisation of gambling.
- He criticised the Commission for exceeding the brief given to it by the **Supreme Court in 2016.** The court had asked the Commission to look into the narrow question of **legalising betting in cricket, and not sports as a whole.**
- The reference had come in its judgment in the BCCI case involving illegal betting in IPL cricket matches. The dissenting note said the “recommendation may lead to an **unhealthy and unwarranted discussion.”**
- The member criticised the Commission for suo motu examining the issue of legalising gambling. He said the Supreme Court had only asked the Commission to examine the **limited question of legalising betting in cricket and not “sports” in a general manner.**

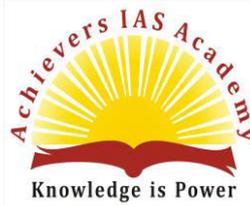
3.RTI Bill to be placed in monsoon session

- The Right to Information (Amendment) Bill, 2018, which proposes to give the **Centre the power to set the tenure and salaries** of State and Central Information

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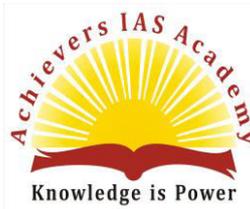


Commissioners, will be introduced in the Lok Sabha in the monsoon session beginning on Wednesday.

- The Bill is being **opposed by several Opposition political parties** and RTI activists, who warn that the amendments will **dilute the RTI law** and compromise the **independence of the Information Commissions**.
- The current law gives Information Commissioners a **tenure of five years** and salaries which match those of **Election Commissioners**. The Bill — which was only circulated to lawmakers on Tuesday morning — **seeks to amend that**.
- The functions being carried out by the Election Commission of India and the central and state Information Commissions **are totally different**
- It argues that while the Election Commission is a **constitutional** body, the Information Commissions are **statutory** bodies, and their differing **mandates** mean that “their status and **service conditions need** to be rationalised accordingly.

Sunlight and shadow

- The government must roll back **amendments that weaken the RTI Act**
- As a law that empowers the citizen, the Right to Information Act, 2005 quickly struck root in a country saddled with the **colonial legacy of secretive government**.
- The move by the NDA government to amend the far-sighted law aims at eroding the **independence of the Information Commissions** at the national level and in the States.
- The proposed amendments show that the Central government seeks control over the **tenure, salary and allowances of the Chief Information Commissioner and Information Commissioners** at the Centre, and the State Chief Information Commissioners.
- Such a change would eliminate the **parity they currently have with the Chief Election Commissioner** and Election Commissioners and, therefore, **equivalence with a judge of the Supreme Court** in matters of pay, allowances and conditions of service.
- The Centre will also fix the **terms for State Information Commissioners**. This is an ill-advised move and should be junked without standing on prestige.
- If at all, the law needs to be amended **only to bring about full compliance** by government departments and agencies that receive substantial funding from the exchequer, and to extend its scope to more institutions that have an influence on official policy.



- The Supreme Court has held the right to information as being integral to the right to free expression **under Article 19(1)(a)**; weakening the transparency law would negate that guarantee.
- In its rationale for the amendments, the Centre has maintained that unlike the EC, **Information Commissions are not constitutional bodies** but mere statutory creations under the law.
- This is a **narrow view**, betraying an anxiety to tighten the hold of the administration on the Commissions, which even now get **little official support to fill vacancies and improve efficiency**.
- A recent public interest petition filed in the Supreme Court by the National Campaign for People's Right to Information pointed out that the **Central Information Commission has over 23,500 pending appeals** and complaints, and sought the filling up of **vacancies** in the body.
- In many States, the Commissions are either moribund or working at low capacity owing to vacancies, resulting in a pile-up of appeals.
- The challenges to the working of the law are also increasing, with many State departments **ignoring** the requirement under Section 4 of the Act to **publish information suo motu**.
- The law envisaged that voluntary disclosure would reduce the need to file an application.
- Since **finances are rarely imposed**, officers give incomplete, vague or unconnected information to applicants with impunity.
- Proposals to make it easier to pay the application fee, and develop a **reliable online system to apply for information, are missing**.
- These are the **serious lacunae**. Attempts were made by the UPA government also to weaken the law, including to **remove political parties from its purview**. Any move to enfeeble the RTI Act will deal a **blow to transparency**.

4. Consult UPSC for selecting police chiefs, SC tells States

How to select DGP

The Supreme Court has issued seven directives to be followed by the States when appointing the Director General of Police

- Proposals should be sent to the UPSC, three months before incumbent's retirement
- UPSC to prepare a panel of names as per Prakash Singh judgment. It should try and choose within the zone of consideration who have got two years of service
- States shall appoint

one of the panel's choices

- States shall not appoint DGP on an 'acting basis'
- The selected person can continue despite his date of superannuation, but the extension should



- be reasonable
- Appointing persons on their retirement day is not in conformity with the Prakash Singh verdict
- State's and Centre's rules running counter to the SC directions will remain in abeyance

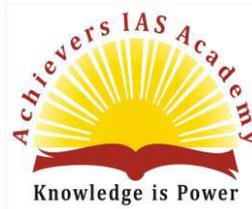
OLD RULE (AS PER PRAKASH SINGH JUDGMENT OF 2006)

▪ DGP shall be selected by the State government from among three senior-most officers of the department empanelled for promotion

▪ The promotion should be based on their length of service, very good record and range of experience for heading the police force

▪ Once the officer is selected for the job, he or she should have a minimum tenure of at least two years irrespective of their date of superannuation

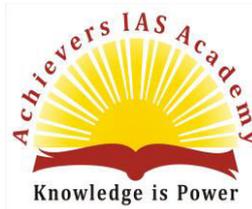
- The Supreme Court on Tuesday restrained the State governments from appointing Directors-General of Police without first consulting the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).
- The State government concerned has to send to the service commission the names of the **probables three months before** the incumbent DGP is to retire.
- The **UPSC will prepare a list of three officers fit to be DGP** and send it back. It shall, as far as practicable, choose the people who have got a **clear two years** of service and must give **due weightage to merit and seniority**.
- The State, in turn, shall 'immediately' appoint one of the persons shortlisted by the commission.
- In **2006, the court passed seven directives**, primarily to "ensure that State governments do not exercise **unwarranted influence or pressure** on the police."
- Secondly, the court directed the States to "ensure that the DGP is appointed through a **merit-based transparent process** and secure a **minimum tenure** of two years."
- The Centre, represented by Attorney General K.K. Venugopal, submitted that of 29 States **only five** — Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Telangana and Rajasthan — **have implemented the Supreme Court direction** of 2006 to consult the UPSC on the appointment of DGPs.
- Some State governments have even gone to the extent of **appointing their 'favourite' officers** as DGP on the **very date of their retirement** so that they would continue to serve for another two years **till the age of 62**.



- Here, the court clarified that though States may make an endeavour to allow the DGP appointed to continue in office **despite his or her date of superannuation**, this extension of tenure should be only for a “reasonable period.”
- On the practice of States appointing ‘**Acting DGPs**’, the court ordered that States shall not “**ever conceive of the idea**” of such appointments. “There is no concept of Acting DGPs,” the apex court said.

5.Court notice on vacancies in information panels

- The Supreme Court on Monday directed **the Centre and eight State governments** to respond to a petition highlighting that a large number of vacancies in the Central Information Commission and the State Information Commissions have **crippled** the Right to Information Act and resulted in **huge backlog**
- The petition said that due to non-appointment of information commissioners, several information commissions **take many months, and in some cases even years**, to decide on appeals and complaints due to accumulation of **pending appeals/complaints, defeating** the entire object of the **RTI Act, 2005**.
- Currently, there are four **vacancies** in the Central Information Commission, though more than 23,500 appeals and complaints are pending.
- The **Andhra Pradesh Commission** is completely non-functional as not a single information commissioner has been appointed.
- The **Maharashtra** Commission which has a backlog of more than 40,000 appeals and complaints, has four vacancies.
- The **Kerala** Commission is functioning with only a single commissioner and has more than 14,000 pending appeals and complaints.
- Similarly, there are six vacancies in the **Karnataka** Commission even though nearly 33,000 appeals and complaints are pending.
- **Odisha** is functioning with only three commissioners and **Telangana** with two commissioners and their backlogs are more than 10,000 and 15,000 appeals/complaints, respectively.
- The **West Bengal Commission** is functioning with only two commissioners and is currently hearing appeals/complaints filed 10 years ago.
- The **effective functioning of information commissioners**, the final adjudicators under the RTI Act, is **critical for the health of the transparency** regime in the country, the petition said.



General Studies-II : Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

1.Mahila Shakti Kendra Scheme to empower rural women through community participation

- Government of India has approved a new scheme namely Mahila Shakti Kendra for implementation during 2017-18 upto 2019-20 to empower rural women through community participation.
- The Scheme is **implemented with cost sharing ratio of 60:40** between centre and states except for **North East and Special Category States** where the ratio is **90:10**.
- The scheme is envisaged to work **at various levels** and at the national level (domain based knowledge support) and state level (State Resource Centre for Women) technical support to the respective governments on issues related to women is provided.
- **Community engagement through College Student Volunteers** is envisioned in 115 **aspirational districts** as part of the Block Level initiatives.
- Student volunteers are to play an instrumental role in **awareness generation** regarding various important government schemes/ programmes as well as social issues.
- **District Level Centre for Women (DLCW)** has also been envisaged for 640 districts to be covered in phased manner.
- These centres to serve **as a link between village, block and state level** in facilitating **women centric schemes** and also give foothold for Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme at the district level.

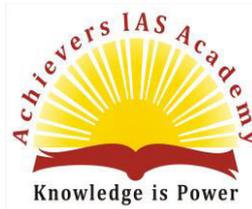
2.WCD to move proposal to amend POCSO Act

- Effort to bring in **gender-neutral law** against sex assaults
- The Women and Child Development (WCD) Ministry is set to move a proposal before the Cabinet this week for **enhanced punishment in cases of sexual assault of male children**
- The Law Ministry has cleared the proposal to amend the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012, for enhancing punishment in cases of **sexual assault against young boys**

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- Sources said the Ministry was working on the proposal to amend the Act to award **death penalty to those convicted of raping children below 12 years**.
- The move is being seen as an effort to bring in a gender-neutral law while dealing with cases of sexual assaults.

3.LS passes Bill on rape punishment

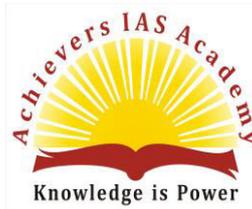
- The Lok Sabha on Monday passed **the Criminal Law (Amendment) Bill, 2018**, to provide the death sentence for rape of girls aged under 12 and **enhance the minimum punishment for rape of a woman** from seven years to 10.
- The Bill amends the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Indian Evidence Act and the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act**.
- The Bill, once passed by the Rajya Sabha, will replace the Criminal Law (Amendment) Ordinance promulgated in April 2018, following an outcry over **the Kathua rape case**.
- The **minimum punishment for the rape of a girl under 12 will be 20 years** of rigorous imprisonment, the **maximum being the death sentence** or life imprisonment.
- Earlier, the punishment was rigorous imprisonment ranging from 10 years to life imprisonment, Minister of State for Home Affairs Kiren Rijiju told the House in his reply to the debate on the Bill.
- For gang rape of a girl below 12, the punishment will be life imprisonment or death.
- The minimum punishment for rape of a girl under 16 will be 20 years of rigorous imprisonment, extendable to life imprisonment. The punishment in such cases earlier was 10 years of rigorous imprisonment. In the case of gang rape of a girl below 16, the punishment will be life imprisonment.
- The minimum punishment under the Bill for the rape of a girl over 16 is 10 years, extendable to life (under Section 376, IPC).
- The minimum punishment earlier was seven years and the maximum, life imprisonment.
- The Bill also provides for **investigation of rape cases within two months from the registration of an FIR**
- While there was no timeline earlier for **disposal of an appeal** after conviction in a lower court, this would now have to be **done within six months**.

4.Govt. deploys 800 IAS officers for village outreach

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- A battalion of Central government IAS officers has been drafted to ensure on the **ground implementation** as the Centre races to saturate 117 “**aspirational districts**” with seven flagship **social welfare schemes** by Independence Day.
- However, questions are being raised about **Centre-State relations** under this model, **in an election year**.
- At least 800 Deputy Secretaries, Under-Secretaries and Director-level officers, drawn from Ministries as diverse as Defence and Urban Affairs, have been assigned about 75 villages to visit, as part of the **Extended Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (EGSA)** from June 1 to August 15. In total, 49,178 villages — most with a **majority SC/ST population** — are being targeted.
- In each village, the Central team **convenes a meeting of villagers** and beneficiaries along with a State government or district official, a lead bank representative and local officials from the agencies **responsible for enrolling people into the schemes**.
- This is a deeply **problematic way** of going about welfare delivery...Constitutionally, while the Centre has **higher powers of taxation**, the bulk of the **expenditure on welfare** is to be done by the States
- Mr. Modi had himself vehemently **opposed central intervention** in matters that were constitutionally **the domain of the States**.

Extended Gram Swaraj Abhiyan (EGSA)

- The scheme will focus on training, building infrastructure, stepping up initiatives for e-governance under the e-Panchayat Mission Mode Project (MMP)
- The scheme will extend to all states and Union Territories and will also include institutions of rural local government in non-Part IX areas, where panchayats do not exist
- The sharing ratio for the state components will be 60:40 barring the Northeast and hilly states where it will be 90:10
- For UTs, the central share will be 100 per cent
- The total proposed cost of the scheme is Rs 7255.50 crore

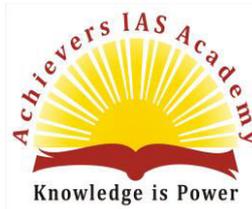
4. Bru people to get voting rights: Ministry

- More than 30,000 people belonging to the Bru community, who **fled from Mizoram to Tripura in 1997** in the wake of inter-community violence, will be given voting rights, a senior Home Ministry official said on Wednesday.

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- **Mizoram goes to polls this year** and the Election Commission has asked the State to revise its rolls and include the members of **the internally-displaced community**.
- As many as 32,876 people of the Reang tribe (known in Mizoram as Brus) are set to be repatriated to Mizoram after a **tripartite agreement** was signed between the **Centre, Tripura and Mizoram**.
- The official said that steps were being taken so **that families were not split and they get rehabilitated** in villages from where they were forced to leave

General Studies-II : Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance- applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

1.EC launches app to report electoral malpractice

- The Election Commission on Tuesday launched an Android-based mobile application named “**cVigil**” for **citizens to share proof of malpractices** by political **parties, their candidates and activists** when the **Model Code of Conduct** is in force.
- The mobile application also facilitates **sharing of geo-tagged photographic and video** evidence without disclosing the **identity** of the sender.
- The uploaded information will be transmitted to the control room, and from there the field units or flying squads, mapped on a **Geographic Information System**, will be immediately alerted for further action.
- In case the complainant does not opt for **anonymity**, the person will also receive an **action-taken report within about 100 minutes**.
- The application, whose Beta version has now been released, will be made available for use during the **four State Assembly elections scheduled for later this year**.

General Studies-II : Role of civil services in a democracy.

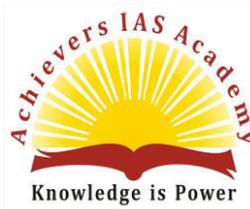
1.Layers of protection

- Protecting honest public servants is important; so are anti-corruption efforts
- The **amendments to the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988**, adopted recently by both Houses of Parliament, are a mixed bag.

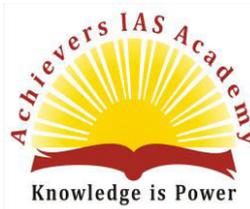
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- Moves to make changes in this law, **aimed at combating corruption** in government, were initiated during the UPA's second term in office and largely centred on the misuse of one provision — **Section 13 (1)d**.
- Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had criticised this section, under which public servants are **culpable for securing a pecuniary advantage** for another “without any public interest”, for ignoring a foundational principle of criminal law: mens rea.
- This resulted in **many honest officials being prosecuted** even when they gained nothing and merely exercised their power or discretion in favour of someone.
- Insofar as it had a **chilling effect on governance** and deterred bold decision-making, the amended form may have a **liberating** effect on honest officials.
- Besides, **it is more concise and restricts criminal misconduct** to two offences: misappropriating or converting to one's own use property entrusted to a public servant or is in his control, and amassing unexplained wealth.
- There was concern initially with the wording, “**intentionally enriches himself illicitly** during the period of his office”, as it raised a doubt whether the ‘intention’ to amass wealth would also have to be proved.
- Now an explanation has been added that a person “shall be presumed to have intentionally enriched himself” **if he cannot account for his assets through known sources of income**.
- By making **citizens liable for offering a bribe to a public servant**, the anti-corruption law has been brought in line with the UN Convention Against Corruption.
- The only **exception to this rule is when one is forced to give a bribe**. This exception kicks in only when the fact that one was forced to pay a bribe is **reported to a law enforcement authority within seven days**.
- The penal provision can empower people by allowing them to cite it to refuse to pay a bribe.
- At the same time, what happens **when the police or any other agency refuses to register a complaint**? People may be left in the lurch with no redress.
- Further, it may render them **vulnerable to threats from unscrupulous public servants** who collect money to speed up public services but do not deliver.
- The most unacceptable change is the **introduction of a prior approval** norm to start an investigation.
- When a prior sanction requirement exists in law for prosecution, it is incomprehensible that the legislature **should create another layer of protection in the initial stage of a probe**.



- Public servants need to be protected against unfair prosecution, but a **genuine drive against corruption** needs a package of legislative measures.
- These should contain penal provisions, create an **ombudsman** in the form of a **Lokpal or Lokayukta**, as well as assure citizens of time-bound services and **whistle-blower protection**.
- Laws to fulfil these objectives are either not operational or are yet to materialise.

General Studies-III : Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

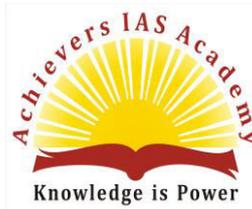
1. One year after

- Since its midnight launch on July 1 last year, India's Goods and Services Tax regime **has evolved significantly**.
- There have been **serious implementation issues**, but also the administrative will and flexibility to address most of these, with the **Centre and States working together in the GST Council**.
- After its initial days were marred by **stuttering IT systems**, the **deadline for filing returns was pushed forward** till most taxpayers got a hang of the system and the GST Network could **augment** its capacity.
- Industry had anxieties about the **multiple tax rates**, ranging from zero to 28%, with a **cess on demerit goods**.
- But gradually, the **number of goods under the 28% bracket** has been brought down to 50 from around 200.
- A unique component envisaged in India's GST regime, matching of **invoices** for granting tax credits, has been kept on hold for fear of adding to taxpayers' transition pains.
- Despite its **glitches and snarls**, the new tax has taken firm root and is altering the economic landscape positively.
- The strongest sign of this is the entry of over 4.5 million entities in the **country's tax net**, many of which would have so far been part of the **cash-driven, informal economy**.
- This expansion of the tax net will **also help increase direct tax collections**.

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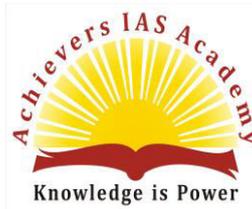
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- At Sunday's GST Day celebrations, Prime Minister Narendra Modi ruled out a single tax rate but hinted at **lower rates for more items**.
- He was reacting to criticism about the flawed implementation of the One Nation, One Tax concept. Rhetoric aside, there is a **clear buoyancy** in revenue after a wobbly initial trend.
- The government was eyeing a little over ₹90,000 crore a month to make up for the revenues earned under the earlier regime and to **compensate States for any losses** due to the GST.
- Finance Minister Piyush Goyal is confident that the average monthly collections this year could touch ₹110,000 crore.
- This surge must allay the fiscal concerns of the Centre and the States, and nudge policy-makers towards **further rationalising the GST structure**.
- If not a single rate, there is certainly room for **collapsing at least two of the current rates**.
- It is also imperative that rates not be tinkered with too often and pricing disputes not be a default option under **anti-profiteering norms** for industry.
- If cement, as a **critical infrastructure input**, must be taxed lower than 28%, then decide a rate and stick to it.
- In its second year, the GST Council must pursue a time-bound approach to execute plans already announced to ease taxpayers' woes, such as **an e-wallet for exporters and a simpler return form**.
- Besides, there must be a road map to bring **excluded products** — petroleum, real estate, electricity, alcohol — into the GST net.
- This **reform still has miles to go**, and the government must stare down the temptation to take **populist steps ahead of general elections**.

GST Council may mull taxing natural gas

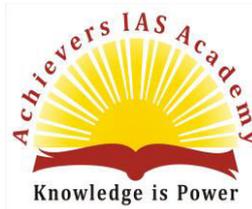
- The 28th meeting of the Goods and Services Tax Council will likely discuss the inclusion of **natural gas** in GST, the **rationalisation** of tax rates on more items, including **sanitary pads and handicraft items**, and the **simplifying of the returns filing procedure**, according to tax analysts.
- Tax analysts said there have been powerful **lobbies** approaching the government to reduce the tax rates on **construction material** such as paints, cement, and marble.
- Some States have also been lobbying for **tax exemptions** for handicraft, handloom and jute products.



- The **Ministry of Women and Child Development** has reportedly requested the Council to reconsider its earlier position and reduce the tax rate on **sanitary pads** from 12% to 5%.
- The Centre had earlier argued that reducing the tax rate on sanitary pads would result in an **inverted duty structure**, where the inputs have a higher tax rate than the final product. However, a leading manufacturer had refuted the argument.

Stimulus mode

- Unveiling a mini-Budget of sorts in the middle of the financial year, the Goods and Services Tax Council has announced **a reduction in the tax rates for over 85 goods**.
- The applicable indirect tax rates on **consumer durables** such as television sets, washing machines and refrigerators, along with a dozen other products, have been **slashed** from 28% to 18%.
- The tax rate on **environmentally friendly fuel cell vehicles** has been reduced from 28% to 12%, and the **compensation cess levied** on them dropped.
- This leaves **just about 35 products, including tobacco, automobiles** and cement, in the highest tax slab of the GST structure. Rakhis without semi-precious stones, as well as **sanitary napkins** that attracted 12% GST, have been exempted from the tax altogether.
- Several other products have been placed in **lower tax slabs**, including those from **employment-intensive sectors** such as carpets and handicrafts. On the **services front**, too, there are important **tweaks** and clarifications.
- Overall, industry and consumers may consider these rate cuts, largely on products and services of mass use, as a **stimulus to drive consumption ahead of the festive season**
- It is also a sign that the government has begun the groundwork to **woo voters ahead** of State and parliamentary elections.
- Whichever way one looks at it, the GST Council's 28th meeting has significantly altered the course of the nearly 13-month-old tax regime.
- Given that GST rates on more than 200 items were already tweaked in past meetings, the original rate structure has been upended to a great extent.
- The actual impact of these changes on **product prices and consumption demand will be visible soon**, but the government's confidence in such a rate reduction gambit indicates it is now **comfortable with revenue yields from the GST**.
- Estimates of revenue losses from these rate cuts vary widely, but it's too early to fret about the impact on macro fiscal numbers.



- If implemented well, the revenue lost **could be offset by higher consumption** that may lead to more investments over time.
- Moreover, improvements in compliance can be expected from the Council's decision to further **simplify paperwork** for small and medium enterprises.
- But there are **two major concerns**. First, since the new rates are to kick in from July 27, companies may **not have enough time to rework pricing strategies** and replace existing market inventory, failing which they could **face anti-profiteering action**.
- Second, members of the Council have for the first time questioned its functioning and alleged that **not all of the changes and rate cuts were placed on the agenda**.
- For a tricky tax that is still a **work in progress**, distrust between the Centre and the States would make **further rationalisation** difficult.
- Such friction must be avoided in a system in which the States have so far worked in tandem with the Centre.

2.RBI flags States' fiscal stress

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has pointed to the fiscal stress that States are facing due to **several factors including farm loan waivers**, and said **higher borrowing by them could crowd out private investment**.
- In a report 'State Finances: A Study of Budgets of 2017-18 and 2018-19,' the central bank noted that States' consolidated gross fiscal deficit (GFD) **overshot the budget estimates** in 2017-18 due to **shortfalls** in own **tax revenues and higher revenue expenditure**.

Inflation now at a 5-month high of 5%

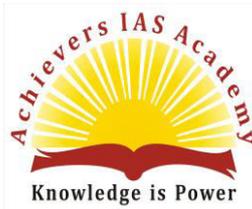
- Retail inflation spiked to a five-month high of 5% in June on **costlier fuel, despite easing food prices**, bolstering the chances of more interest rate increases by the RBI.
- Retail inflation, based on the Consumer Price Index, stood at 4.87% in May. It was 1.46% in June 2017. The earlier high was in January this year, at 5.07%.
- As per data released by the Central Statistics Office, inflation in the food basket was 2.91%, as against 3.1% in May.

Industrial growth dips to 7-month low

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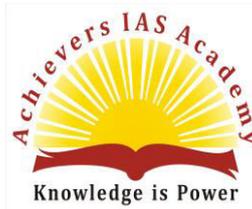
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- Industrial production growth slipped to a seven-month low of 3.2% in May mainly on **sluggish performance of manufacturing and power sectors** coupled with poor offtake of fast moving **consumer goods (FMCG)**.

Inflation worries

- Wholesale Price Index data for June warrant a closer **macro-economic scrutiny**
- The Wholesale Price Index as a measure of price gains is back in the national spotlight. The latest data, which show **a sharp surge in wholesale inflation** in June, to a 54-month high of 5.77%, are a cause for concern.
- While the WPI is **no longer the primary focus** in the Reserve Bank of India's inflation-targeting approach to monetary policy formulation — having ceded that role to the **Consumer Price Index** — the gauge remains **economically significant** nevertheless.
- The measure of wholesale price gains is **the key deflator** in computing the Index of **Industrial Production** and is also used to deflate **Gross Domestic Product at current prices**.
- A detailed look at WPI data for June reveals several pressure points warranting closer macro-economic scrutiny.
- Not only have **rising crude oil prices** persistently fanned inflation — by contributing significantly to a 214 basis-points month-on-month jump in June for the primary articles group — they have also led to rapidly accelerating double-digit price gains in the fuel and **power group**.
- Inflation in the fuel and power group has **quickened every month** since February's 4.55% print, to 16.18% in June.
- **Food articles** are another source of worry, especially the prices of **vegetables** and the politically sensitive duo of **potatoes and onions**.
- While inflation in vegetable prices **more than tripled** in pace from May's 2.51% to 8.12% in June, the annual gains in potato prices have been in a steep upward spiral for five straight months and exceeded 99% in June.
- And while inflation in **onion** prices at the **wholesale level has cooled appreciably** from January's 194% level, at 18.25% the rate is still far from reassuring.
- **Manufactured** products — the third key group-level constituent of the WPI with the largest weight of 64.2% — are **also signalling a worrying wider inflationary trend**.
- This could **feed through to consumer price gains**, which touched a five-month high of 5% in June.

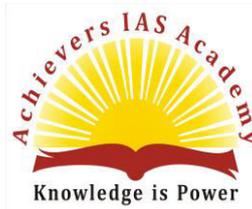


- The headline inflation in this group, spanning 564 items, ticked up for a third consecutive month in June to 4.17%.
- **Manufacture of basic metals** that includes a range of goods from alloy steel castings, stainless steel tubes to copper plates and aluminium sheets — products that find **diverse applications** across multiple end-use industries — posted headline **inflation** of 17.34%, an increase from the 15.79% reading in May.
- To be sure, the price gains have to be seen from the perspective of an **unfavourable base effect** — WPI inflation in June 2017 was just 0.9%.
- But policymakers **can ill afford to ease their vigil**, especially given the government’s decision to increase the **minimum support price for kharif** crops and **uncertainty about the spatial impact** of this year’s monsoon rains on overall agricultural output.
- After all, a sustained trend of high WPI inflation will not only add **pressure on the RBI to raise** interest rates, but could also potentially **undermine the pace of GDP growth**.

3.Banks agree to resolve stressed assets quickly

What is ICA and how will it work?	
<p>The pact: ICA is an agreement among banks that have dues from a borrower in stress. The pact mandates the lead bank to formulate a resolution plan that will be executed in a time-bound manner</p>	<p>Exit option: Dissenting lenders will have an exit route, either selling their exposure at a discount or buying exposure of the other lenders at a premium</p>
<p>Applicability: All corporate loans above ₹50 crore</p>	<p>Who is in? 24 banks, including SBI, Bank of India and Corporation Bank have already signed up. A majority of the lenders are expected to follow suit by the end of the week. Some NBFCs may also come on board</p>
<p>Binding condition: If 66%, or two-third, of the lenders in terms of aggregate exposure approve, then the pact is binding on all the lenders</p>	<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>Target date: The framework is expected to be operational by the end of this month</p> </div>

- Leading lenders of the country on Monday signed an agreement among themselves to **grant power to the lead lender** of the consortium to draw up a resolution plan for stressed assets.
- The plan would be implemented in a **time-bound manner** before bankruptcy proceedings kick in, as was the mandate of the Reserve Bank.
- The move comes after the banking regulator, in its February 12 circular, **dismantled all the existing resolution mechanisms**, such as the joint lenders’ forum, and asked lenders to start resolution for the asset even if the default was by one day. It had also

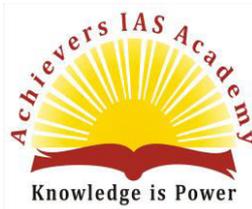


mandated that if the **resolution plan** was not finalised within 180 days, the account had to be referred for bankruptcy proceedings.

- The agreement, known as Inter-Creditor Agreement (**ICA**) was framed under the aegis of the Indian Banks' Association and follows the recommendations of **the Sunil Mehta Committee** on stressed asset resolution. **Lenders** including State Bank of India, Bank of India, and Corporation Bank have already signed the pact.
- The ICA is applicable to all corporate borrowers who have availed loans **for an amount of ₹50 crore or more under** consortium lending / multiple banking arrangements, IBA said in a statement.
- The lender with the **highest exposure to a stressed borrower** will be authorised to formulate the resolution plan which will be presented to all lenders for their approval.
- **Dissenting lenders can either sell** their exposure to another lender at a 15% discount **or buy the entire exposure** of all the banks involved, at a 25% premium.

Cosmetic repair

- It will now be easier for banks to **sell stressed assets**, but other tricky issues remain
- Indian banks trying to sell their troubled assets now have one less hurdle to cross.
- A group of banks, including public sector, private sector and foreign banks, signed an **inter-creditor agreement** on Monday to push for the speedy resolution of non-performing loans on their balance sheets.
- According to the agreement, a majority **representing two-thirds of the loans within a consortium** of lenders should now be sufficient to override any objection to the resolution process coming from dissenting lenders.
- Minority lenders who suspect they are being short-changed by other lenders can now either **sell their assets at a discount** to a willing buyer or buy out loans from other lenders at a premium.
- The inter-creditor agreement is aimed at the resolution of loan accounts with a **size of ₹50 crore and above** that are under the control of a group of lenders.
- It is part of the “**Sashakt**” plan approved by the government to address the problem of resolving bad loans.
- Over the last few years, Indian banks have been forced by the Reserve Bank of India to **recognise troubled assets on their books**, but their resolution has remained a challenge.
- According to banker Sunil Mehta, who headed a panel that recommended the plan, **disagreement between joint lenders** is the biggest problem in resolving stressed assets.



- The government hopes that the holdout problem, where **the objections of a few lenders** prevent a settlement between the majority lenders, will be **solved** through the inter-creditor agreement.
- Such an agreement may persuade banks to embark more quickly on a resolution plan for stressed assets.
- This is an **improvement on the earlier model**, which relied solely on the **joint lenders' forum** to arrive at a **consensus** among creditors. It is, in fact, logical for joint lenders who want to avoid a deadlock to agree on the ground rules of debt resolution prior to lending to any borrower.
- But the obligation on the lead lender to come up with a time-bound resolution plan can have **unintended consequences**. Banks may be compelled to engage in a **quick-fire sale of stressed assets** due to **arbitrary deadlines** on the resolution process.
- This will work against the interests of lenders **looking to get the best price for their stressed assets**.
- Also, it is often in the interest of the majority of creditors to take the **time** to extract the most out of their assets.
- Meanwhile, the biggest obstacle to bad loan resolution is the absence of buyers who can purchase stressed assets from banks, and the **unwillingness of banks to sell their loans at a deep discount to their face value**.

Unless the government can solve this problem, the bad loan problem is likely to remain **unresolved for some time to come**

General Studies-III : Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; e-technology in the aid of farmers Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.

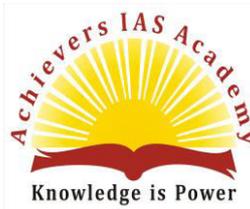
1.MSP for paddy hiked by ₹200

- In keeping with the promise made in this year's Budget speech, the **Union Cabinet** has approved a hike in minimum support prices (MSPs) for kharif crops so that they are **50% higher than the cost of production, not including land costs**.

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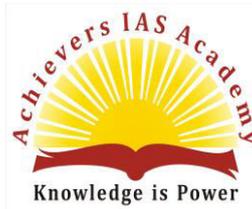
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- This includes a **₹200 per quintal increase** in the MSP for paddy, which is likely to **inflate the food subsidy bill** by over ₹15,000 crore
- MSPs were **announced for 14 commodities**, with major hikes being seen in cereals such as bajra, jowar and ragi, as well as cotton.
- Mr. Singh said the ₹200 per quintal increase in the MSP for paddy was the highest ever such year-on-year **hike in absolute terms**.
- However, **in percentage terms**, this year's MSP of ₹1,750 per quintal is only a 12.9% increase from last year's MSP of ₹1,550 per quintal.
- In **2008-09** — also an election year — the UPA government had announced a 20.8% year-on-year hike in the MSP of paddy.

A political ploy

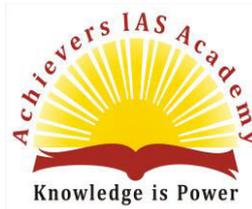
- The **hefty hike in MSPs will not benefit all farmers** — **agri-reforms** are essential
- The Centre has cleared a hike in the minimum support prices (MSPs) for the **kharif summer crop**, ranging from a modest 3.7% increase for urad to as much as a 52.5% for the cereal ragi over the previous season.
- The NDA government says this 'redeems' its promise of assuring farmers a price **at least 150% of the cost of production**.
- The **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices** is said to have gone by this cost-plus-50% principle, in line with the **farm sector strategy** announced in this year's Budget.
- While making calculations, it **relied on estimates of input costs** actually paid by farmers and the imputed value of **unpaid family labour** engaged in the field.
- Yet, the **final hikes announced for some crops are even higher** – with the MSP for bajra pegged 97% over estimated costs.
- On an average, the MSP hike notified for 17 kharif crops is about 25% higher and constitutes the **biggest hike since 2013-14**.
- All in all, the announcement is an **olive branch to farmers** who over the past year spearheaded widespread protests over the rural distress.
- With less than a year to go for the general election, the NDA government has clearly opted to **reverse the abundant, inflation-weary caution** it had exercised while **fixing MSPs**.
- In fact, soon after assuming office in 2014, it had even **admonished State governments for granting bonuses** over and above the MSPs.
- Given that the MSP mechanism is primarily enforced through official **procurement only for wheat and paddy**, mere announcement of prices for other crops is **unlikely to suffice in ensuring farmers get those returns**.



- Anticipating this, the Budget had promised that **Niti Aayog would work with the Centre and States** to put a **fool-proof mechanism** in place so that farmers get adequate remuneration if market prices slip below the MSP.
- This could be through government purchases or a **gap-funding mechanism** whereby the difference between MSPs and market prices is transferred to farmers.
- Little is known on the status of this endeavour, or the Centre's procurement strategy for this year.
- As things stand, the **impact of these hikes on consumer price inflation** is expected to vary between 0.5% and 1% by the end of 2018-19. On the other hand, the Centre's fiscal arithmetic may not be too adversely affected if its outlay on procurement is around ₹15,000 crore, about 0.1% of GDP.
- But these **costs could mount** based on the procurement strategy and the new mechanism for MSP enforcement.
- While **rural incomes may rise** from this farm-friendly gesture, **concomitant reforms to free agricultural markets** are vital to prevent a distortionary effect on farmers' choices on account of MSPs.
- **Easing onerous stockholding limits** under the Essential Commodities Act and avoiding frequent curbs on farm exports are key.

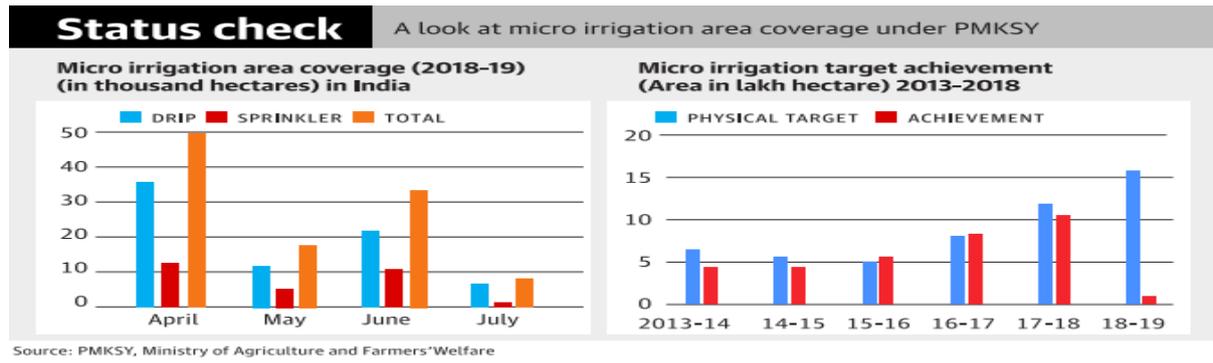
Farmers hit by slump in pepper prices

- A sharp fall in the **price of black pepper, coupled with low production** of the spice, has put farmers in **Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka** — the three major pepper producing States in the country — in a fix.
- **Black pepper prices crashed** from ₹760 a kg in 2017 to ₹600 a kg and then to ₹500 a kg. The spot price of pepper in Wayanad, a major pepper-producing region in Kerala, on Tuesday, was ₹300-₹310 as against ₹500 during the corresponding period last year.
- **The cheaper pepper from Vietnam continues to flood the market through Sri Lanka**, aided by a low-duty structure under South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) pact and Indo-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (ISFTA).
- Under ISFTA, India could import 2,500 tonnes of pepper a year from Sri Lanka **without duty, and above the quota**, a duty of 8% would be imposed as per the SAFTA, Mr. Abdu said. But **direct pepper imports from Vietnam attract a duty of 52%** under the ASEAN trade agreement.
- More than 6,000 tonnes of pepper were imported this year for **domestic and re-export purposes** even after the amendment.
- Flooding of **'smuggled' pepper in Indian markets** from Vietnam via Bangladesh, Myanmar and Nepal is the other threat to industry

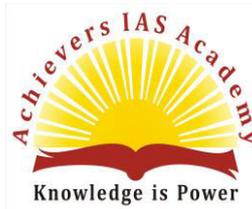


- The Ministry of Commerce had fixed a **minimum import price (MIP)** of ₹500 a kg of pepper in December 2017 to curb the imports. When import continued with the aid of loopholes in the order, the ministry further amended the **restrictions** for import a few months ago. But that too has **failed to generate any positive results**

3. Watershed development projects lagging behind badly



- Irrigation projects of **the Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY)** may have taken the spotlight in the Prime Minister's speech during Friday's no-confidence motion debate in the Lok Sabha.
- However, a less well-known but vital component of that scheme is **watershed development, which is lagging behind badly**, according to a Parliamentary Standing Committee (PSC) report.
- When the report was first tabled last July, not a single one of the 8,214 projects sanctioned between **2009 and 2015** at a cost of ₹ 50,740 crore had been completed, said **the Standing Committee on Rural Development**.
- In its response, the Department of Land Resources (DoLR) had updated that 849 projects in 11 States were completed by October 2017, but admitted that 1,257 projects had not even completed **the initial step of preparing detailed project reports (DPRs)** at that point, although no new projects were sanctioned after 2015-2016.
- Having taken into account the government's response and action-taken report, the Committee submitted its final report to Parliament last week. Terming the pace of development of the scheme as "**lethargic**", the Committee urged the DoLR to "go all out on a war footing scale for the expeditious completion of the remaining projects."
- Within the site of a watershed development project, **a ridge is identified and structures** such as check dams, percolation dams, ponds and channels are built from the ridge to the valley.

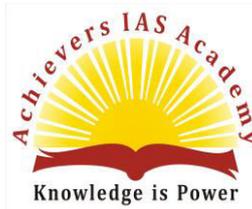


- Projects take **four to seven years to complete**, according to the scheme's guidelines. In the long-term, results are impressive, said a senior official of the Rural Development Ministry, pointing to a May 2018 evaluation study of **MGNREGA's** (Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act) water and land management projects, a chunk of which are implemented in **convergence with the PMKSY's watershed component**.
- About **78% of beneficiaries saw an increase in the water table**, while 66% also reported benefiting from better availability of fodder, thanks to such water conservation works.
- Apart from DoLR and NREGA, the Ministries of Water Resources and Agriculture, including the Animal Husbandry and Fisheries departments, all play a role, and **coordination** on the ground takes time, he says.
- The idea of **convergence** is good but, in practice, government departments work in **separate silos**
- Despite huge government investments, watershed development benefits are not becoming sustainable in the long-term because, while the physical structures may get built, the **governance structures are missing**
- If **local Panchayati Raj leadership and watershed user associations** are not strengthened and empowered, any benefits will be cyclical and short-term only

General Studies-III : Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment Disaster and disaster management.

1.India to expand polar research to Arctic as well

- 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.
- This month, it 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.
- It's also in talks with **Canada and Russia**, key countries with presence in the Arctic circle, to establish **new observation systems**, according to a source. Now, India only has **one Arctic observation station near Norway**.



- While annual missions to maintain India's three bases in Antarctica will continue, the new priorities mean that there will be **more expeditions and research focus on the other poles**
- **Climate change**, said the source, person familiar with deliberations, 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**. India is already an observer at the **Arctic Council** — a forum of countries that decides on managing the region's **resources and popular livelihood** and, in 2015, set up an **underground observatory**, called **IndARC**, at the Kongsfjorden fjord, half way between Norway and the North Pole.

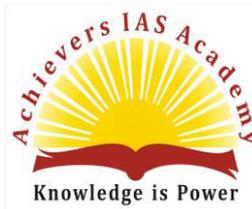
2.SC lashes out at Centre on pollution

- The court has been urging the government since December 2017 to move forward towards a **nationwide ban** on the use of **petcoke and furnace oil** to power up industries, in a bid to fight pollution.
- The court had by then, in October last year, already ordered a ban on the industrial use of petcoke and furnace oil in **Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan**.
- The ban on use came after an EPCA Report, including the ban **on sale, distribution and use** of furnace oil and petcoke in the NCR. Their use is already prohibited in Delhi.
- Pursuant to the Supreme Court ban, both **the Environment Ministry and the Central Pollution Control Board** had brought into “immediate effect a prohibition on the use of petcoke and furnace oil by any industry, operation or processes within the States of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Rajasthan until further orders.”
- The court had even highlighted how petcoke **is being imported from countries like the United States and China**, which have already stopped using them after due consideration of its harmful effects **on human beings and environment**.

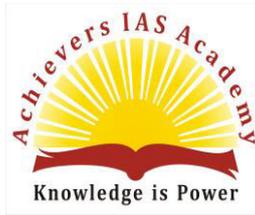
3.Flood of despair

Mumbai's capacity to deal with nature's challenges is falling with every passing year

- Mumbai is an efficient city in some ways, but this reputation depends on fair weather. It turns into a **soggy mess with the arrival of a monsoon**.



- This year the season has begun with the spectacular **collapse of a pedestrian bridge on a crucial railway** line in Andheri, causing injuries and overall urban paralysis.
- Not even a year has passed since the ghastly stampede on a foot overbridge at Elphinstone Road station, that took over 20 lives.
- The recurrent disasters involving infrastructure are proof of the **indifference among policymakers** to the city's needs, even as they speak of a 'global standard' of living.
- It is fair to ask whether Mumbai is prepared, after the passage of a dozen years, to meet a disaster such as the **July 2005 flooding** caused by 99.4 cm of rain in a 24-hour period.
- The city continues to attract a large number of people looking for **opportunity** — **the population rose** from 11.9 million in 2001 to 18.4 million a decade later.
- But **urban managers**, led by the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, have **not invested enough in new infrastructure** and have done a shoddy job of **maintaining the old**.
- If Maharashtra has to achieve higher rates of **economic growth** and touch an ambitious 10%, as Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis desires, Mumbai's infrastructure planning should be in the hands of an empowered custodian who can **secure the cooperation of all urban agencies**.
- A return to nature is needed to relieve Mumbai of its flooding woes. According to one estimate, **the city's Mithi river, blocked by debris and garbage**, has lost about 60% of its catchment to development.
- The setting up of a **Supreme Court monitoring committee has not helped** much. It will take resolute measures to stop the **release of sewage and industrial chemicals** into the Mithi, and retrieve lost mangroves.
- A cleaner river connected to **functional drainage** can aid in the speedy removal of flood waters, and improve the environment.
- Yet, there are other basic challenges which are particularly worrisome to less affluent residents.
- In a 2015 study, the **World Bank found** that half of the poor **did not consider moving out of flood-prone areas**, because of the uncertainty of living in a new place with severe **social disruptions** and reduced access to education and health facilities.
- What this underscores is the need to make the **best use of all available space, densify development** where feasible, and improve conditions in situ.
- It is welcome that a **joint safety audit with the IIT** will be conducted on public infrastructure, in the wake of the bridge collapse. But such inspections **must be regularly carried out and quick remedial steps taken**.

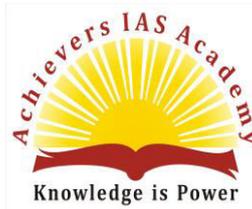


4. Arunachal stares at water scarcity

- ‘Situation could be as grim as **Shimla**’
- Arunachal Pradesh is staring at scarcity of water, the very resource that is expected to make the frontier State **India’s hydroelectric powerhouse**.
- On Saturday, the State’s Minister for Environment and Forests Nabam Rebia said more than **200 rivers and streams** across Arunachal Pradesh **have dried up**. This, he felt, would soon make the State face shortage.
- The **State’s forest cover has decreased from 82% to 79%** and **catchment** areas of many rivers are under threat because of **jhum (slash-and-burn) cultivation and landslides**
- **Large-scale hunting of animals**, too, has been a factor in the depletion of the State’s natural resources
- Many communities hunt birds and animals for food and adornment of **traditional headgear**. Wild animals such as Asiatic black bear, leaf deer and Mishmi takin are considered **delicacies**.

5. Chuck that plastic for a bamboo sipper

- A scientist from the **Botanical Survey of India (BSI)** in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, has come out with a **green alternative** to use-and-throw plastic drinking straws, by tapping bamboo.
- The **bamboo species** Schizostachyum andamanicum, **endemic** to the islands looks ideal for the purpose.
- Discovered on the island about two decades ago, this bamboo is characterised by **thin large hollow erect culm (stem) with long internodes**.
- Not only is a bamboo straw **biodegradable**, it can be **reused for years**. People can keep one in their homes and use it **multiple times like tooth brushes, avoiding plastic straws**.
- Just 50 paise per piece. Its **longevity makes it cheaper than plastic**.



General Studies-III : Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

1. Centre upholds Net neutrality proposals

- In a move that will ensure open and free Internet in India, the government has approved the **principle** of net neutrality.
- This means that telecom and Internet service **providers must treat all data on the Internet equally**, and not discriminate or charge differently by user, content, site, platform, or application.
- They cannot engage in practices such as **blocking, slowing down or granting preferential speeds** to any content.
- The Telecom Commission (TC) — which is the highest decision-making body in the Department of Telecom (DoT) — approved the recommendation made by the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) eight months ago.
- **Certain emerging and critical services** will be kept out of the purview of these norms.
- A **separate committee** has been set up under the DoT to examine what these critical services will be.
- These may **include autonomous vehicles, digital healthcare services or disaster management**.
- The **regulator**, in November 2017, batted in favour of Net neutrality.
- The regulator had said, “Internet access services should be governed by a principle that restricts any form of discrimination or interference in the treatment of content, including practices like blocking, degrading, slowing down or granting preferential speeds or treatment to any content.”
- The regulator has further recommended **establishing a multi-stakeholder not-for-profit body** for the monitoring and enforcement of these principles.

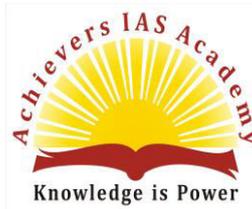
2. Intellectual Property rules amended

- The Union Ministry of Finance has amended Intellectual Property rules to **revoke the power vested with Customs authorities** to seize imported products based on complaints of **patent infringement**.
- On June 22, the Ministry made two amendments to the Intellectual Property Rights (Imported Goods) Enforcement Rules, 2007.
- Firstly, the Intellectual Property Rights (Imported Goods) Enforcement Amendment Rules, 2018, **omits all reference to the Patents Act, 1970**.

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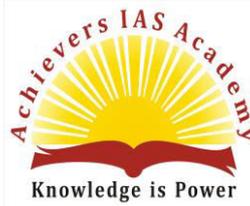
- Another amendment incorporates further conditions that oblige the right-holder to notify the Commissioner of Customs of any amendment, **cancellation, suspension or reaction** that concern Intellectual Property rights, and require the Customs authorities to accordingly amend, suspend or cancel the corresponding protection provided by them.
- In the past, **mobile phone companies** have faced issues because of the earlier rules. For instance, in 2007, Madurai-based Ramkumar, who held a patent for a dual SIM, **sought seizure of products imported by Samsung and Spice Mobile**, which affected several importers.

3. Union Cabinet clears DNA profiling Bill

- The Union Cabinet has cleared a Bill that allows law enforcement agencies to **collect** DNA samples, **create** “DNA profiles” and special **databanks** for forensic-criminal investigations.
- The DNA Technology (Use and Application) Regulation Bill, 2018, is the latest version of a Bill that originated as a DNA “profiling” Bill, framed by the Department of Biotechnology.
- The aim of that draft legislation was to **set in place an institutional mechanism** to collect and deploy DNA technologies to identify persons based on samples collected from **crime scenes or for identifying missing persons**.
- However there was **opposition**, in that some activists argued that the manner in which DNA information was to be collected and the way they were to be stored by **forensic laboratories constituted a violation of privacy**.
- The Bill creates a **DNA Profiling Board** that would be the final authority that would authorise the creation of **State-level DNA databanks**, approve the methods of collection and **analysis of DNA-technologies**.

4. ‘ISRO-like’ ocean mission planned

- Looking to emulate the success of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) in designing and launching satellites, the Centre has drawn up a five-year, ₹8,000 crore plan to explore the **deep recesses of the ocean**.
- The **Union Earth Sciences Ministry** — tasked with coordinating the exercise — unveiled a blueprint of the ‘**Deep Ocean Mission (DOM)**’ on Friday.
- Among the key deliverables to achieve these goals are an **offshore desalination plant** that will **work with tidal energy**, and developing a **submersible vehicle that can go to a depth of at least 6,000 metres** with three people on board



- India has been allotted a site of 1,50,000 sq. km in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) by the **UN International Sea Bed Authority for exploitation of polymetallic nodules (PMN)**. These are rocks scattered on the seabed containing **iron, manganese, nickel and cobalt**.
- “It is envisaged that **10% of recovery** of that large reserve can meet the energy requirement of India for the **next 100 years**. It has been estimated that 380 million metric tonnes of polymetallic nodules are available at the bottom of the seas in the Central Indian Ocean,” the report adds. India’s Exclusive Economic Zone spreads over 2.2 million sq. km and in the deep sea, lies “**unexplored and unutilised**.”
- The focus will be on **technologies** for deep-sea mining, underwater vehicles, underwater robotics and ocean climate change advisory services, among other aspects.

5.ISRO to test its astronaut escape feature

- Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has scheduled a ‘pad abort test’ of an **experimental space crew capsule** on Thursday morning as an important cog of its plan to **send Indians to space one day**.
- The launch pad abort test, or PAT, involves **aborting a space capsule at launch to save the inmates**.
- ISRO describes PAT as the first milestone in qualifying its crew escape system in an **emergency**. The test is also one of the many main and supporting technologies that the space agency is developing ahead of its ambitious **Human Space Flight Programme (HSP)**.
- On firing, the module will be jettisoned and **demonstrate a safe descent with the help of parachutes** — all this in around **three minutes**.

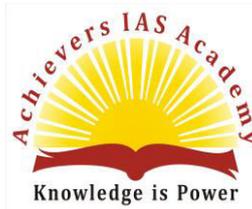
6.India plans to procure missile shield from U.S.

- India is in talks with the U.S. to procure an advanced air defence system to defend the **National Capital Region (NCR) from aerial attacks**. The process for procuring the **National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System-II (NASAMS-II)**, estimated at \$1 billion, has been initiated.
- This system will help in **preventing 9/11-type attacks** [when terrorists flew hijacked planes into New York’s World Trade Center] on Delhi. It is in the Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) stage now
- India is deploying a **multi-tiered air defence network** to fully secure its airspace from incoming fighter **aircraft, missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV)**.

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- The official said this system would **complement other systems** such as the medium and long-range **surface-to-air missile (SAM) systems** under procurement. India is also in an advanced stage of talks with Russia for the procurement of very **long range S-400 air defence systems**.
- Apart from these imports, India is also developing an indigenous **Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system**.
- Phase-I of the BMD is expected to be deployed soon.

7. Leg-up for private sector participation in defence equipment manufacturing

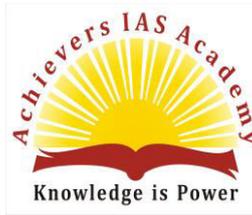
- In a major step towards boosting private sector participation in domestic defence manufacturing, the **Defence Acquisition Council (DAC)** approved the implementation of **Strategic Partnership** guidelines on Monday.
- SP model aims to **revitalise defence industrial ecosystem** and **progressively build indigenous capabilities** in the private sector to design, develop and manufacture complex weapon system for future needs of armed forces.
- The amplifying guidelines lay emphasis on incentivisation of **transfer of niche technology and higher indigenous content**
- The SP model has **four segments** — **submarines, single engine fighter aircraft, helicopters and armoured carriers/main battle tanks** — which would be specifically opened up for the **private sector**.
- Under this policy **one Indian private company would be selected** in each segment which would tie-up with shortlisted global equipment manufacturers to manufacture the platforms in India under technology transfer. The ambitious policy came into effect in May last year but progress was delayed due to the lack of specific guidelines.
- The DAC also **approved platform specific guidelines** for procurement of Naval Utility helicopters. Similar guidelines for the other categories will be issued soon.
- The Ministry stated that all procurements under the SP model would be executed by **specially constituted Empowered Project Committees** to “provide focussed attention and ensure timely execution.”

General Studies-III : Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention Security challenges and their management in border areas; linkages of organized crime with terrorism Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate

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1.Details of 2015 Naga agreement emerge

- The government has informed a Parliamentary panel that it signed a framework agreement with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland-Isak-Muivah (NSCN-IM) after it agreed on a settlement within the Indian federation with a “**special status**”.
- The details are part of the **213th report on the security situation** in the Northeastern States tabled by the **Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs** in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday.
- The committee was also informed that the “**contours**” **had not been spelt out in the framework agreement** that was “just about the **recognition of the uniqueness** of the Naga history by the Government of India”, and some **special arrangements** will have to be made for the Nagas.
- **Article 371A** of the Constitution makes it clear that they are special and a special status has been accorded to them. A similar kind of status, with some local variation, and some change to **the Nagas in the neighbouring States can be explored**
- According to the report, Mr. Ravi also informed the committee that the Nagas had now reached a common understanding with the government that “**boundaries of the States will not be touched**” and “some special arrangements would be made for the Nagas, wherever they are.”
- Initially, the Nagas had stuck to the idea of **unification** of Naga inhabited areas, resolutely maintaining their stand of ‘**no integration, no solution.**’ However, they have now reached a common understanding with the Government that boundaries of States will not be touched,
- The NSCN-IM has been fighting for ‘**Greater Nagaland**’ — it wants to extend Nagaland's borders by including **Naga-dominated areas** in neighbouring States.

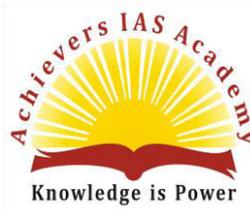
2.House panel concerned over Assam kidnappings

- A **parliamentary standing committee** has expressed deep concern over a large number of **kidnappings in Assam, mostly of women**, and surge in **insurgency** in Arunachal Pradesh, which it termed as “alarming”.
- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs, headed by Congress leader P. Chidambaram, in its report said that it was deeply worried that a **large number of victims** who were kidnapped or abducted in Assam before and during 2016 were yet to be recovered.

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- “Even more worrisome is the fact that a large majority, at **more than 81%, of victims are women**. The committee is of the view that this may also point towards a **connection** between such **abductions and human trafficking**
- The committee recommended that an **inter-State investigation** may be carried out to find out the reasons for this extremely high rate of kidnappings of women.
- Referring to **Arunachal Pradesh**, the panel said unlike the overall Northeast region, which shows a declining trend of **insurgency-related incidents and casualties suffered by the civilians**, the State has seen a rise in the number of such incidents.
- “The committee is alarmed to observe that in 2012, Arunachal Pradesh accounted for just 5 % of the incidents in the entire region, however, in 2017, it accounted for almost 20 per cent of the incidents in the region,” the report said.
- This is an indication of the fact that **the security situation has deteriorated in Arunachal Pradesh** vis-à-vis in the entire Northeast region, it said.

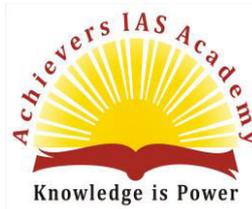
3.High on rhetoric

- Punjab’s drug menace demands an **all-out war** that goes beyond empty gestures
- It has taken Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh over a year and a half to launch his much-anticipated war on drugs.
- This he did on July 4 by ordering **mandatory drug tests for all government employees**, including the police.
- While this is welcome, even if belated, it is a **very small and insubstantial** measure towards curbing the **pervasive drug menace**.
- For someone who promised to wipe out drugs from the State within a month of being elected, the conduct of annual drug tests on some 3.25 lakh employees is a piece of **tokenism**. More steps are needed; less missteps, too.
- The decision of the Punjab Cabinet to recommend the **death penalty to drug-peddlers** is an example of the latter. Capital punishment is **abhorrent**.
- Given that there is evidence that suggests it is **also no guarantee of deterring crime**, this is more of an empty signal.
- What is required is a **comprehensive** war on drugs fought on several fronts, including **interventions in the community** to spread awareness and foster a culture against the use of drugs.
- The challenges faced by the State are huge. Estimates vary but by some accounts as many as **two-thirds of all households in Punjab** have a drug addict in their midst.
- **Punjab’s prisons are overcrowded** with drug-users and peddlers, and its streets and farms witness the **easy availability of narcotics and opiates**.
- Last year the government arrested 18,977 peddlers and treated some two lakh addicts.

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- The sheer extent of the problem suggests it is **more than just a few profiteers** that have been responsible for causing this menace or helping to sustain it.
- Something of this scale required a **wide network, a well-oiled and smoothly run machinery** that has the secret support and **collaboration** of at least a few of those who work in **government**.
- Given the **geography**, the drugs, whether it is opium or heroin, make an easy and assisted entrance into Punjab from the **Golden Crescent** (Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan), and **synthetic** drugs are thought to come in via **Himachal Pradesh**.
- That means those guarding Punjab's 553-km **border** with Pakistan must take serious steps to plug the inflow.
- The **Central security forces** are obviously beyond the control of Amarinder Singh. Therefore, security-planners in New Delhi have to make sure that the border is properly **barred to the flow of narcotic substances**.
- This is a **national problem** as a substantial portion of the drugs that land in Punjab **make their way to the rest of the country**.
- Given the **links between drugs and terror**, this poses a **national security threat**. Then there are the politicians.
- The previous Akali Dal-BJP alliance had also promised to drain Punjab's vast drug swamp.
- The **political class has a critical role** to play in winning the war on drugs. It is not enough that politicians merely line up to have themselves tested for drugs to win political brownie points.
- They need to put the State and the nation **above self-serving political ends and agree** that this battle must be fought in concrete ways, going beyond **photo-ops and sound-bites**.

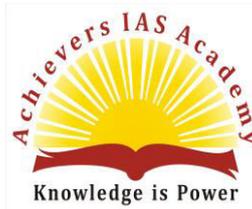
4.Govt. taps RBI to track all transactions

- In a move aimed at widening the crackdown on **black money** and following the money trail flowing in and out of thousands of **shell companies**, the Centre is planning to set up an information technology (**IT**)-based **mechanism** to keep a tab on all **non-cash financial transactions in the country**.
- Currently, the idea is to make the **RBI the sole repository** of such information, which will **not be made available to other agencies** such as the **income tax department and the enforcement directorate** as a default.

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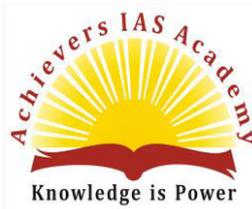


- Such agencies may be required to **make specific requests** to the central bank if they want information on a particular set of entities.
- Under the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act**, **banks and financial** institutions are already required to alert the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU), under the Finance Ministry, to any suspicious transactions, cash or otherwise.
- **Cash transactions of more than ₹10 lakh** (including a series of transactions integrally connected to each other and exceeding ₹10 lakh in a month), need to be reported to the FIU.
- All suspicious transactions need to reported to the unit within seven days after it is concluded that those are **suspicious in nature**.
- The move to track all financial transactions is the latest in a series to **curb black money and identify shell companies**
- Following the 2016 **demonetisation** exercise that rendered more than **86% of the currency in circulation invalid**, it was found there had been a **significant spurt in the operations of shell firms** that typically have **no assets or active businesses**.
- The Centre has **shut down more than two lakh such entities**.
- More than two lakh other firms that have not been carrying out operations have been sent notices. Depending on their responses, a decision would be taken on how many would be **deregistered**.
- In FY17, the **FIU had received** more than 15.9 million Cash Transaction Reports and 4.73 lakh **Suspicious Transaction Reports**.

General Studies-III : Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.

1. We pose no threat to India, says Rohingya militant group

- An armed group blamed for attacks against the Myanmar military has said that it poses no threat to India and expressed “heartfelt appreciation” for **Indian support to the Rohingya refugees**.
- In a statement released to the media, Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) said that its struggle is to ensure the rights of the Rohingya refugees and that it is **not connected to the Islamic State (IS) or Pakistan’s intelligence agencies**.



- The statement was issued following reports in an Indian daily that the group **had targeted the Assam Rifles** recently near the India-Myanmar border and that it aims to build training camps in the Myanmar territories close to Indian frontiers. ARSA **denied the attack and termed the news report as “blatant manipulation”**.
- The group also claimed that it opposes terrorist attacks and gave **assurances of peace to Bangladesh**.

International News:

General Studies-II : India and its neighborhood- relations.

1.Modi, Moon inaugurate world’s largest mobile factory’ in Noida

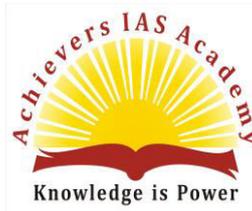
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President of the Republic of Korea Moon Jae-in on Monday inaugurated **Samsung’s mobile manufacturing** plant, touted as the **biggest in the world, in Noida**.
- With this plant, set up on an investment of ₹4,915 crore, the South Korean electronics major plans to **make India an export hub**, with **50% of its overall production** coming from here in the next three years from the present 10%. Samsung said it would almost double its manufacturing capacity to 120 million by 2020 from 68 million now.
- Speaking at the event, Mr. Modi said the government’s ‘**Make in India**’ initiative was not just an economic policy measure, but also a commitment of **better ties with friendly nations like South Korea**. He added that **30% of phones** made at the Noida plant would be **exported**.
- The move comes at a time when companies globally are seeking to grab a pie of the **exploding smartphone market in India**, which is the world’s fastest growing smartphone market, where shipments grew 14% to 124 million in 2017, as per IDC.
- It overtook the U.S. last year to become the **world's second-largest smartphone market after China**.
- The Prime Minister noted that India now ranks second, globally, in the manufacture of mobile phones, with the **number of mobile phone manufacturing factories rising** from just 2 to 120, in about four years’ time, creating **4 lakh direct employment opportunities**.

Modi, Xi reaffirm promise of peace

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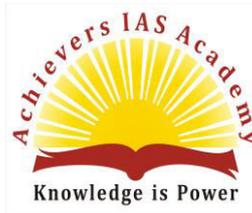
- India and China held talks on Thursday on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Johannesburg, to **maintain peace and tranquillity in the border areas**.
- The official said both sides firmed up a round of defence and security related talks in August. The talks would be held in the backdrop of the first anniversary of the **Doklam standoff**.
- The **high level people-to-people mechanism** to be established between two sides and which will be headed by the External Affairs Minister on the Indian side and the State Counsellor and Foreign Minister on the Chinese side, will also be in this year, most likely in October in India
- The discussion also included possibilities **of export of urea among other items from India to China**. The official said an Indian trade delegation will travel to China during August 1-2 to explore export possibilities for **soya, non-Basmati rice and pharmaceutical products**

2.Island trouble: two choppers, delayed visas

- Bilateral relations between India and the Maldives are on the brink once again as the deadline for India to withdraw its two helicopters has passed and the issue of **visas for thousands** of Indian job-seekers remains unresolved.
- The visas of more than 26 Indian Navy personnel operating **the Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH)** were valid till June 30. However, Male has refused to extend their visas and has already asked India to take back the two ALHs.
- Meanwhile, most companies in the Maldives are calling for **job applicants who are “not Indian nationals”**.

India to bring back copters

- India is preparing to bring back the **two helicopters it had gifted to the Maldives**, in a sign that it is hoping to use dialogue as the way forward in resolving issues with Male after months of strain in ties, caused by a squeeze on **work permits to Indians and unhappiness over the Maldivian election process**.
- According to an official source, the government has in principle decided to withdraw the helicopters, as well as accompanying personnel from two atolls in the Maldives, which has been the consistent demand of the Yameen government for the last few



months.

- After months of a standoff, the **government is understood to have decided that talks are the only way forward** and that India will not force any action on the Maldives.
- However, India will continue to raise its concerns over the conduct of elections in the Maldives, which it believes it is entitled to as a **“SAARC country and as a neighbour.”**

General Studies-II : Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

1.Packed agenda for PM on Africa trip

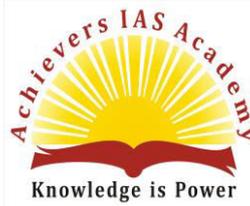
- India will sign a **defence framework agreement with Rwanda** next week when Prime Minister Narendra Modi visits **Kigali** along with his tour of Uganda and South Africa from July 23 to 27, the External Affairs Ministry announced on Friday. In South Africa, he will attend the **BRICS summit**.
- The defence agreement is expected to **enhance ties between the two countries**, which became Strategic Partners in January 2017, and will be accompanied by a number of agreements on **dairy cooperation, leather exports, agriculture and cultural ties**.
- Mr. Modi is expected to **gift 200 cows to a model village in Rweru**, and will visit the **genocide memorial centre in Kigali**, remembering the one million Rwandans killed in the **Hutu-Tutsi conflict** during the 1994 pogrom.
- India was expected to **enhance the Lines of Credit for Rwanda**, which have already topped \$400 million for **development cooperation**.
- Significantly, India has yet to set up a **long-promised embassy in Kigali**, despite specific promise to do so in a joint statement after a meeting between President Paul Kagame and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in **January 2017 in Delhi**.
- In South Africa, officials confirmed that PM Modi will meet **South African President Cyril Ramaphosa**. He is also expected to meet with **Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping**.

PM in Africa amid a fall in trade

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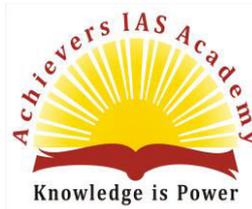
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- Prime Minister Narendra Modi will encounter challenges of **Chinese competition as well as declining Indian trade** and investment figures on his three nation, five-day tour to Africa, part of what officials called an “**unprecedented engagement**” with **the continent** by his government.
- Despite the **ramping up of high-level visits**, various studies and statistics show that Indian interest in the Africa growth story has **not kept pace**, and even declined through most of the period. The greatest slump appears to have been in **investment figures**.
- According to the “**World Investment Report for 2018**”, issued by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Indian FDI in Africa in 2016-17 at \$14 billion was even lower than it was in 2011-12 at \$16 billion.
- In fact, with the exception of the 2015 figures, which jumped due to a single investment of \$2.6 billion by ONGC Videsh Ltd. for a stake in the Rovuma gas field of Mozambique in 2014, **Indian investment in Africa has steadily decreased year-on-year since 2014**.
- While one of the issues has been the **investment climate in African countries itself**, which has seen FDI flows drop 21% in 2016-17 according to UNCTAD, India is the **only one of the big investors in Africa to have reduced its investment**.
- **China**, for example, **increased** from 2011-12, when its investment levels were identical to India’s at \$16 billion, to a massive \$40 billion in 2016-17.
- One of India’s biggest problems has been its **concentration on East African trade and investment opportunities**, as well as a dependence on **petroleum and LNG**, say experts.
- India’s exports to African countries have also been dominated by petroleum products, and a **diversification** is needed to broaden economic engagement.

Modi meets Ramaphosa amid media row over visit

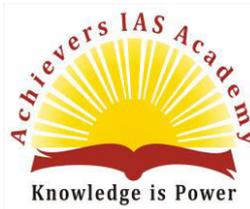
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday met **South African President Cyril Ramaphosa** as part of multiple bilaterals scheduled on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in Johannesburg even as local media reported that he had come close to pulling out of the summit.
- A report suggested that Johannesburg had sent Energy Minister Jeff Radebe at the last moment to **defuse a diplomatic crisis** that erupted after the **National Prosecuting Authority (NPA)** of the country wrote to Mr. Modi saying it **was investigating the charges by the Muslim Lawyers Association** over human rights violations in Kashmir.



- It was reported that Mr. Radebe explained to New Delhi that the NPA was **not empowered to press charges as the Indian Prime Minister** was protected by the **Geneva Convention** governing international summits. The Ministry of External Affairs has not commented on this episode so far.

2. Allies, interrupted

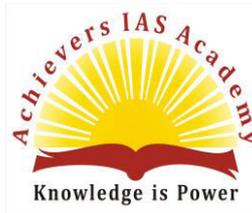
- **India and the U.S.** must urgently take steps to arrest the drift in bilateral ties
- There are enough signs that relations between India and the United States have suffered, with officials in both capitals now freely conceding that their **interests are diverging**.
- From the U.S. side, policy decisions by President Donald Trump to walk out of the multilateral nuclear deal with **Iran**, and the U.S. Congress's **CAATSA law** sanctioning Iran and Russia have set up an inevitable conflict.
- Mr. Trump's insistence **on tough sanctions against all those** continuing to engage with Iran and Russia limits India's options on energy security and defence procurement.
- During her visit last week, **Nikki Haley**, the U.S. envoy to the UN, told India to "revise" its relationship with **Iran**; this line is expected to be reiterated by U.S. interlocutors in the coming days.
- Added to this confrontation is the **U.S.'s tough policy on trade tariffs**, applied to ally and adversary alike, including India.
- For its part, the Narendra Modi government has taken a policy turn away from four years of a **pro-U.S. tilt**.
- Mr. Modi's speech at the **Shangri-La Dialogue** last month, in which he invoked the long-lapsed phrase "**strategic autonomy**", set at rest any doubt that there is a reset in his foreign policy.
- Since January, he has **personally reached out to the Chinese and Russian Presidents** in informal summits, and invited the **Iranian** President to Delhi.
- At variance with the U.S. position on limiting engagement with these very countries, India **promised to raise oil imports** from Iran this year, committed to far greater engagement on the **Chabahar port project** and oilfields in Iran, while negotiating a \$5.5 billion deal with Russia for the **S-400 Triumph missile systems**. These will trigger U.S. **sanctions** unless the two countries reach a compromise.
- What is more troubling for bilateral ties is that despite the obvious problems, the **political will to address these issues is now considerably diminished**.



- In contrast to his meetings with the Russian and Chinese leaderships, Mr. Modi has had **little contact with Mr. Trump** since their meeting in Manila last November, which by all accounts did not go well.
- Now, the **postponement** of the Indian Foreign and Defence Ministers' "**2+2**" **dialogue with their U.S. counterparts** has denied the governments a chance to gather together the fraying bilateral threads.
- It is imperative that the dialogue be quickly **rescheduled**. While the U.S. has traditionally applied pressure on its allies to limit their engagement with countries it considers to be threats to the international order, the manner in which deadlines have been publicly issued by the State Department twice this week will only make its **demands more difficult for India to even consider**.
- India must now decide how best to deal with the ultimatums, with U.S. sanctions kicking in by November. The clock is ticking on the relationship.

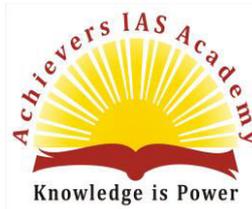
India braces for more U.S. pressure

- The government is bracing for more "pressure" from the U.S. on Iran sanctions in the upcoming weeks, but hopes that there may be an exception made for its **dealings on the Chabahar port**, as officials meet with a U.S. delegation in the next few weeks.
- However, sources said the government had **yet to take any decision on cutting oil import from Iran**, as the U.S. had demanded, when its U.N. envoy Nikki Haley visited India last week.
- India is **second only to China** when it comes to the import of oil from Iran, and in February, after President Hassan Rouhani's meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi, India **had committed to increase that intake by 25% this year**.
- However the U.S.'s decision to **walk out of the multilateral nuclear agreement with Iran and re-imposition** of sanctions by November has cast a shadow on future engagement.
- This week, the U.S. State Department **reiterated its intention to get tough with all countries** engaging with Iran for trade, energy and infrastructure projects.
- The discussions on **Iran sanctions**, as well as on impending sanctions under the new American **CAATSA** law that imposes strictures on trade with Russian and Iranian entities, were expected to have been taken up during the "**2+2**" **meeting** between External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and their counterparts in Washington this week, but the talks were **cancelled by the U.S.**, owing to another meeting in North Korea for nuclear talks.
- Government officials called speculation over the cancellation "unfounded" and said the two sides were working to reschedule the 2+2 engagement soon.



Sanctions relief

- The resolution of the CAATSA stand-off will let India and U.S. address other bilateral issues
- The **U.S. Congress's report** allowing the introduction of a presidential waiver of its controversial Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) will be greeted with a sense of **relief in both New Delhi and Washington.**
- The two governments have been working hard to avert a stand-off over the issue. The matter was particularly heated with India making it clear it would go ahead with the **S-400 Triumph missile system deal** with Russia regardless of the U.S. law and the threat of sanctions.
- CAATSA, signed reluctantly by President Donald Trump last August would have forced his administration to impose sanctions on any country carrying out significant **defence and energy trade** with sanctioned entities in **Russia, Iran and North Korea.**
- **Mr. Trump had objected**, arguing that the law took away his powers to decide on such matters.
- Indian delegations led by the Foreign Secretary had made a three-fold case for the waiver: that no weapons India bought would be used against the U.S.; that the U.S., which wants to partner with India in **the Indo-Pacific**, would hamper India's military abilities by applying the sanctions or denying the country crucial technology; and that India has **significantly reduced its dependence on Russian military** hardware while increasing defence purchases from the U.S., and it would be unfair if the U.S. rewarded the effort with **punitive measures.**
- After months of testimony, including a final push for **waiver for countries like India, Indonesia and Vietnam** by U.S. Defence Secretary James Mattis a few days ago, the Congressional committee has relented.
- The Joint Explanatory Statement of the Committee of Conference, which reconciles House and Senate versions, has accepted the need for waivers.
- The "**modified waiver authority**", or amendment to Section 231 of CAATSA proposed by Congress, allows the President to waive sanctions in certain circumstances, **for six months at a time**, as long as he certifies that it is in the **U.S.'s national security interests** and does not "endanger" ongoing operations.
- While the resolution of CAATSA-related sanctions is welcome, it isn't the only irritant in the U.S.-India relationship that needs the attention of the External Affairs and Defence Ministers at the '**2+2 dialogue**' with their American counterparts scheduled for September.



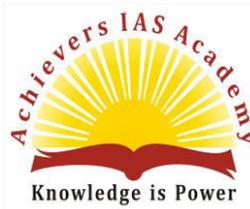
- The sanctions proposed by the Trump administration for **energy trade with Iran** still loom, as do possible punitive measures at the World Trade Organisation over tariffs and counter-tariffs the two countries have imposed on each other.
- New Delhi will also be aware that the waivers are contingent on Mr. Trump's continued support to **Indian defence requirements**.
- Given the **capricious and unpredictable policy swings** Mr. Trump has shown, it will be prudent for New Delhi not to presume that the problems over CAATSA have fully blown over.

India to host U.S. for 2+2 talks

- India will host the inaugural round of the two-plus-two dialogue with the U.S. on September 6.
- The ministerial-level meeting will cover **bilateral, regional and global issues**, the External Affairs Ministry said in a statement on Friday.
- The dialogue will be led by **External Affairs Minister** Sushma Swaraj and **Defence Minister** Nirmala Sitharaman from the Indian side and **Secretary of State** Mike R. Pompeo and **Secretary of Defence** James Mattis from the U.S.
- The 2+2 meeting will cover a broad range of bilateral, regional and global issues of shared interest, with a view to **strengthening strategic and security ties** between the two countries
- The announcement of the meeting, which was postponed twice before, comes in the middle of growing concern **that anti-Iran sanctions** from the U.S. might affect the **energy scenario of India**.

3.Moon shine

- India-South Korea ties have drifted too long — political ownership of them will help
- That South Korean President Moon Jae-in undertook a **four-day visit** to India this week, when there is hectic diplomacy over the Korean peninsula, speaks of his commitment to improving bilateral ties.
- In fact, during his election campaign last year he had **promised to raise bilateral ties to the level of South Korea's relations** with what it calls the four major powers: the U.S., **Russia, China and Japan**.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi too has often said he sees South Korea as a **significant partner for India**, and had travelled to Seoul.



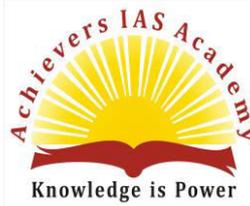
- But despite the personal touch, and ambitions to **align India's Act East policy with Korea's New Southern Policy**, ties have drifted for **lack of focus**.
- **Trade**, at \$20 billion, is a fraction of the potential, given that India and South Korea are Asia's **third and fourth largest economies**.
- This figure has been a cause for worry, as the two countries had hit the \$20-billion mark in 2011 after the signing of **the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement**.
- The **large trade deficit in South Korea's favour** has led India to be wary of further opening up.
- In turn, Korean companies **cite problems in doing business in India**, despite a special "**Korea Plus**" desk set up by the Prime Minister's Office in 2015.
- **Tourism** between the two countries has always been low, and strategically both New Delhi and Seoul **are preoccupied with tensions in their immediate neighbourhoods** and ties with the big world powers than with each other.
- On Mr. Moon's watch, this may change. Both Mr. Modi and he exuded a **sense of purpose and there is a clear road map** on converging interests.
- Agreement to invoke the "**early harvest**" **clause in the 2010 CEPA** will allow both to **do away with tariffs in 11 areas**, benefiting Indian **seafood exporters and food processing units**, as well as South Korean **petrochemical companies**.
- The inauguration of **Samsung's biggest mobile factory** in Noida will bring investment and create jobs in India. More Korean companies should be **persuaded to invest, by projecting a counter-narrative** to the failed bid by the steel company **Posco** to set up its plant in Odisha.
- Much will depend on negotiations on **the regional free trade agreement**, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.
- On the strategic front, India has asserted its place as a "stakeholder" in the Korean peace process, while South Korea has for the first time shown an interest in talking about an **Indo-Pacific policy**.
- In the short term, a symbolic token towards shared interests will be seen in a **joint "capacity-building" programme in Afghanistan**.
- At a time when **U.S. foreign policy is capricious and unpredictable**, and **China's** is making purposeful moves towards **global domination**, it is important that the South Korea-India partnership grows and consolidates, to **contribute to stability in the region**.

4. 'India a stakeholder in Korean peace'

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- Praising South Korean President Moon Jae-in for his role in talks with North Korea, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said India is also a **stakeholder and beneficiary of the Korean peninsula peace process**.
- India has been worried about its **trade deficit** with South Korea that stood at \$12 billion last year, while Korean businessmen have complained about problems in the “**ease of doing business**”.
- In addition to the agreements on upgrading their **economic partnership CEPA**, trade remedies, railway safety research, cyber strategy, and cultural exchanges, India and South Korea signed a **joint vision statement on strategic ties in the region**.
- RoK and India will enhance **military exchanges**, training and experience-sharing, and research and development including innovative technologies for mutual benefit.
- The **bilateral vision document** also committed to building a “peaceful, stable, secure, free, open, inclusive and rules-based region,” incorporating President Moon slogan of “**3Ps: People, Prosperity and Peace**”.
- India and South Korea signed a joint statement agreeing to discuss an ‘**early harvest package for the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** aimed at identifying key areas for **enhanced trade between the two countries**.

5.Iran softens stand, says it knows India’s concerns

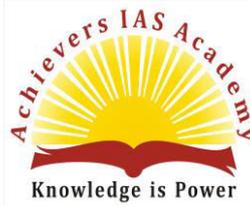
- A day after threatening to cut **special privileges for India**, Iran on Wednesday toned down its rhetoric and said that it “**understands**” the **challenges Delhi is facing** on the energy front.
- An official statement from the Embassy of Iran conveyed that Tehran has always **welcomed Indian initiatives in the port of Chabahar** and urged Delhi to fast-track investments in the **connectivity project**.
- India is a **sovereign nation** and taking into account many criteria including its friendly relations with supplier countries, market factors, geopolitical and geo-economical considerations **market factors, geopolitical and geo-economical consideration** and potentials and reliability of the oil suppliers, chooses its **energy partners**
- It is learnt that Indian diplomats reached out to their Iranian counterparts following the public statement which was made at an event which was also attended by the **Ambassador of Venezuela, another major energy supplier to India**.

India cuts Iranian oil imports in June ahead of U.S. sanctions

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- Indian refiners cut imports of Iranian oil last month as they started weaning their plants off crude from the country to avoid sanctions by the **United States** that are set to take effect in November.
- India's monthly oil imports from Iran **declined** to 5,92,800 barrels per day (bpd) in June, **down 16% from May**, according to data from industry and shipping sources.
- The United States in May said it would **reimpose the sanctions after withdrawing from a 2015 agreement** with Iran, Russia, China, France, Germany, and Britain, where Tehran agreed to curb its **nuclear activities** in return for the lifting of earlier sanctions.
- The Indian refiners will want to comply with the limits to maintain their **access to the U.S. financial system**.

6.China presses Europe for anti-U.S. alliance on trade

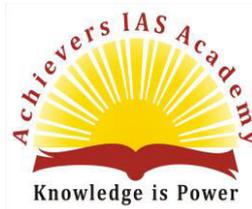
- China is putting pressure on the European Union (EU) to issue a strong joint statement against **President Donald Trump's trade policies** at a summit later this month but is facing resistance, European officials said.
- In meetings in Brussels, Berlin and Beijing, senior Chinese officials, have proposed an **alliance between the two economic powers** and offered to open more of the Chinese market in a gesture of goodwill.
- One proposal has been for China and the EU to launch joint action against the U.S. at the World Trade Organisation. But the EU, the world's largest trading bloc, has **rejected the idea of allying** with Beijing against Washington
- Despite Trump's tariffs on European metals exports and threats to hit the EU's automobile industry, **Brussels shares Washington's concern about China's closed markets** and what Western governments say is Beijing's **manipulation of trade to dominate global markets**.
- It also underscores China's **new boldness in trying to seize leadership** amid divisions between the U.S. and its European, Canadian and Japanese allies over issues including **free trade, climate change and foreign policy**.
- A report by **New York-based Rhodium Group**, a research consultancy, in April showed that **Chinese restrictions on foreign investment are higher in every sector** save real estate, compared to the European Union, while many of the big Chinese takeovers in the bloc would not have been possible for EU companies in China.
- **China has promised to open up**. But EU officials expect any moves to be more **symbolic than substantive**.

China eyes Indian pharma as U.S. trade turns cloudy

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- China is preparing to give **swift regulatory approvals to India-manufactured drugs**, the head of an Indian export promotion group said, as Beijing looks for new commercial partners ahead of what could be a **protracted trade war with the United States**.
- Indian firms are looking to **fill gaps in Chinese demand for generic drugs**, software, sugar and some varieties of rice
- No concrete deals have been signed but the outlook for pharmaceutical sales from India is positive, according to officials from both nations.
- **India dominates the world's generic drugs market**, exporting \$17.3 billion of drugs in the 2017/18 (April-March) year, including to the U.S. and the EU. **But only 1% of that went to China**, the **world's second-largest market** for pharmaceuticals, industry data shows.
- Swift regulatory approvals in China would allow Indian companies to **boost revenue at a time when pricing scrutiny** and regulatory troubles have hurt U.S. sales.
- China has been **touting greater access to cancer drugs** and pushing to lower prices in a bid to soothe a major social issue in the country, where traditionally many patients with **serious illness have had to pay out of their pocket for cutting-edge drugs** or have had to buy medicines through **unapproved grey market channels**.
- China also lags far behind in terms of **drug approvals versus developed markets**.
- The issue was highlighted in a recent film that went viral in China which echoed the U.S. Dallas Buyers Club about a **Chinese cancer patient who** had helped others getting **unapproved cancer drugs at lower prices shipped in from India**.
- About 250 product applications from Indian drug firms are **pending** before the CFDA, some of them for years, an Indian trade ministry official said.

General Studies-II : Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.

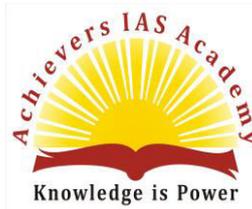
1.BRICS news portal soon

- A decision to establish a **BRICS Media Academy and a BRICS news portal** were among those taken at the 2018 BRICS Media Forum at in South Africa on Thursday.
- The Forum, a high-level dialogue among media organisations from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, was held over two days under the theme — '**Fostering an Inclusive, Just World Order**'.

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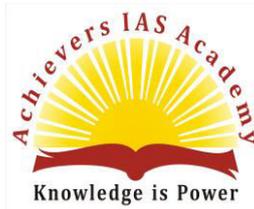
- Initiated by Xinhua News Agency, the BRICS Media Forum is supported by Brazil's CMA Group, The Hindu Group, Sputnik News Agency and Radio and South Africa's Independent Media.
- The Forum was attended by 38 **mainstream media organisations** from BRICS nations, including five from India.
- The Forum, which opened on former South African **President Nelson Mandela's 100th birth anniversary** on July 18, unanimously agreed to adopt the **Cape Town Declaration 2018**.
- It pledged to strive to create a media landscape that upholds the integrity of news that is **created and shared** through the BRICS nations. It also committed itself to **limit the spread and effect of fake news** and increase **people-to-people exchanges** between journalists and others employed in the media.

2. 'India may lose U.S. trade spat in WTO over export support'

- Commerce Secretary Rita Teotia on Thursday said there was a "real" possibility that India could lose the trade dispute that the U.S. had filed in the WTO on **export subsidies**.
- This, she said, was **because income levels in India had crossed** the threshold for exports to be subsidised.
- She said while direct subsidy to exports cannot be given, the government can legitimately support regulatory compliances required in other countries.
- The government has already set up an expert group to look at WTO-compliant support to exports, and a **draft set of schemes** will be announced for discussion, she said.
- The U.S., in March this year, dragged India to the WTO's dispute settlement mechanism over export subsidies, saying that these incentives were **harming American companies**.

3. Interpol Red Notice against Nirav Modi

- The Interpol has issued the Red Notice against diamond merchant Nirav Modi, his brother Neeshal Modi, and their employee Shubash Parab on the **request of the Enforcement Directorate** and the CBI in connection with the ₹13,578-crore **Punjab National Bank fraud**.



- The Red Notice not only **restricts a fugitive's movement** in the 192 member-countries of the Interpol but also empowers enforcement agencies in the respective foreign jurisdictions to **detain the person** for deportation or extradition to the requesting country.

Other Issues in News:

1.2021 census data to be stored electronically

- The data collected during the 2021 Census will be stored electronically, the first time since the decennial exercise was conducted in **1951** in Independent India.
- The records, running into **crores of pages**, were occupying space in government office and it has now been decided that they will be stored in an electronic format. Any **tampering** with the data will invite **punishment** under the IT Act, 2000

2.9 parties oppose proposal for simultaneous elections

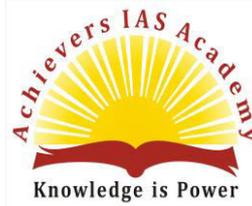
- Political parties were divided on the issue of holding simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly elections during **consultations with the Law Commission of India**.
- As many as nine parties expressed their reservations while **four parties supported the move**.
- The **two major national parties** — the BJP and the Congress — **stayed away** from the Law Commission's deliberations.

3.Rijiju tells States to fight fake news

- Union Minister of State for Home Kiren Rijiju said on Monday that “rumours and fake news” had become a big menace, amid reports that around 20 people had been lynched in different parts of the country in the past one month following **child-lifting rumours** spread **primarily through WhatsApp**.

4.Being an MP not a full-time job: Centre

- Being a Member of Parliament is not a “**full-time**” **job and legislators cannot be stopped from doubling up as advocates**, the Centre told the Supreme Court on Monday. Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal made this submission before a three-



judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra on a petition filed by advocate Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay to ban sitting MPs from practising in courts.

- The focus of the petition is **Rule 49 of the Bar Council of India Rules**, which mandates that “**an advocate shall not be a full-time salaried** employee of any person, government or concern”.

5.‘Eat Right Movement’ off to a healthy start

- Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) on Tuesday unveiled ‘The Eat Right Movement’, built on two broad pillars of ‘**Eat Healthy**’ and ‘**Eat Safe**’.
- The programme aims to **engage and enable citizens** to improve their health and well-being by making the right food choices.
- Stating that its aim was to **cut down salt/sugar and oil consumption** by 30% in three years Mr. Aggarwal said **that 15 major food manufactures have already joined the programme.**

Like,Share and Comment to support the initiative

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