

Weekly Current Affairs

VOL-225

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NATIONAL



National Maritime Day: April 5

- In India, 5 April is marked as the National Maritime Day every year. On 5 April 1919 navigation history was created when SS Loyalty, the first ship of The Scindia Steam Navigation Company Ltd journeyed to the United Kingdom.
- This was a crucial step in India shipping history when sea routes were controlled by the British.
- The theme of the 55th edition of the National Maritime Day 2018 celebrations is "Indian Shipping – An Ocean of opportunity".
- This day is celebrated to illustrate the awareness in supporting intercontinental commerce and the global economy as the most well-organized, safe and sound environmentally responsive approach of transporting goods from one corner to another corner of the world.

After US and China, India third-most vulnerable country to cyber threats

- India emerged as the third most vulnerable country in terms of risk of cyber threats, such as malware, spam and ransomware, in 2017, moving up one place over the previous year, according to a report by security solutions provider Symantec.
- In 2017, 5.09% of global threats detected were in India, slightly less than 5.11% in 2016. The U.S. (26.61%) was most vulnerable to such attacks, followed by China (10.95%), according to 'Internet Security Threat Report'.
- The global threat ranking is based on eight metrics – malware, spam, phishing, bots, network attacks, web attacks, ransomware and crypto miners.



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- As per the report, India continues to be second most impacted by spam and bots, third most impacted by network attacks, and fourth most impacted by ransomware.

POSHAN Abhiyaan (National Nutrition Mission)

POSHAN Abhiyaan under Innovation component, envisages undertaking activities to be implemented intended to improve the service delivery system, capacity building of front line functionaries and community engagement for better nutritional outcomes. The successful pilots may be taken up later-on for scaling up in similar contextual specificities on a broader platform.

The annual targets set under POSHAN Abhiyaan beginning 2017-18 are as under:

- Prevent and reduce stunting in children (0-6years): By 6% @ 2% p.a.
- Prevent and reduce under-nutrition (underweight prevalence) in children (0-6 years): By 6% @ 2% p.a.
- Reduce the prevalence of anemia among young Children(6-59 months): By 9% @ 3% p.a.
- Reduce the prevalence of anemia among Women and Adolescent Girls in the age group of 15-49 years: By 9% @ 3% p.a.
- Reduce Low Birth Weight (LBW): By 6% @ 2% p.a.
- The target of the mission is to bring down stunting among children in the age group 0-6 years from 38.4% to 25% by 2022.

Char Dham project

- Ministry of road, transport and highway (MORTH) in their affidavit submitted recently before the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in matter of Char Dham widening road in Uttarakhand stated that in all the total 53 projects/stretchers of Char Dham, none is above 100 km which is why no environmental clearance was obtained.
- A petition was filed which said that the entire project of 900 km was misleadingly fragmented into segments which are actually continuous stretches of five national highway to avoid environmental clearance. It stated that the criteria of Cumulative Impact Assessment and carrying capacity study must be followed for Himalayan terrain while considering any infrastructural projects.
- The project involves developing and widening 900-km of national highways connecting the holy Hindu pilgrimage sites of; Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri at an estimated cost of Rs.12,000 crores. The roads will be widened from 12m to 24m and the project will involve construction of tunnels, bypasses, bridges, subways and viaducts.



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Representation of People's Act: 'one candidate, one seat'

- The Election Commission has told the Supreme Court that it supports the proposal to allow one candidate to contest from only one constituency in an election. The EC expressed this view in an affidavit it filed in the petition over the matter.
- A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court challenging Section 33(7) of the Representation of the People Act of 1951 that allows a person to contest elections to Parliament and state assemblies from two constituencies and sought an end to the practice.
- One person, one vote & one candidate, one constituency is the dictum of democracy. However, as per the law, as it stands today, a person can contest the election for the same office from two constituencies simultaneously. When a candidate contests from two seats, it is imperative that he has to vacate one of the two seats if he wins both.
- The ECI has alternatively suggested that if existing provisions are retained then the candidate contesting from two seats should bear the cost of the bye-election to the seat that the contestant decides to vacate in the event of his/her winning both seats. The amount in such an event could be Rs 5 lakh for assembly election and Rs 10 lakh for parliament election.

Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY)

- The move comes after several requests from states as well as observations made by Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in its 2017 report that old crop insurances schemes which have now been merged with PMFBY, were poorly implemented during 2011-2016.
- The scheme insures farmers against a wide range of external risks — droughts, dry spells, floods, inundation, pests and diseases, landslides, natural fire and lightning, hailstorms, cyclones, typhoons, tempests, hurricanes and tornadoes. The scheme also covers post-harvest losses up to a period of 14 days.
- The Scheme covers all Food & Oilseeds crops and Annual Commercial/Horticultural Crops for which past yield data is available and for which requisite number of Crop Cutting Experiments (CCEs) are conducted being under General Crop Estimation Survey (GCES).
- These older schemes didn't find too many takers among farmers, the main dampener being their limited risk coverage. In mNAIS, the premium was capped at 8 to 12 per cent of the sum insured to limit the government's subsidy outgo. Thus, for crops where actuarial rates were higher (that is, the premiums were steeper), insurance companies proportionally reduced the sum insured. Many a time, the 'compensation' fell way short of even the farmer's cost of production.
- The Fasal Bima Yojana has done away with this cap on premium. The sum insured per hectare for a farmer is now decided by the District Level Technical Committee and is pre-declared and notified by the State Level Coordination Committee on Crop Insurance.



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- The farmer also pays less — the premium he shells out is 2 per cent of the sum insured for all kharif crops and 1.5 per cent of it for all rabi crops. For horticulture and commercial crops, the premium is 5 per cent of sum covered. The remaining premium is paid by the government.

Literature and Architecture: National Culture Fund

- As per latest data released by the government, 34 projects have been successfully implemented under National Culture Fund Scheme till date, thus, promoting, protecting and preserving India's cultural heritage. National Culture Fund (NCF) was set up as a Trust under the Charitable Endowment Act, 1890 in November 1996 by the Government, with a view to mobilize extra resources through Public Private Partnerships.
- The National Culture Fund is managed and administered by a council headed by Hon'ble Culture Minister to decide the policies and an Executive Committee headed by Secretary, Culture to actualize those policies.
- The Fund aims at inviting the participation of the corporate sector, non-government organizations, private/public sector as well as individuals in the task of promoting, protecting and preserving India's cultural heritage.
- All the projects undertaken by the NCF are completed within a specified period, in accordance with an MoU signed by NCF with the concerned donor organization.

Delhi becomes first city in India to deploy Bharat Stage 6 Fuel

- Delhi has become the first city to deploy Bharat Stage VI Fuel for both petrol and diesel. two years ahead of the rest of the county. The idea behind this implementation two years ahead of the previously scheduled date of April 1, 2020, is to help battle Delhi's long-standing terminal pollution problem.
- The BS — or Bharat Stage — emission standards are norms instituted by the government to regulate the output of air pollutants from internal combustion engine equipment, including motor vehicles. India has been following the European (Euro) emission norms, though with a time-lag of five years.
- With other developing countries such as China having already upgraded to the equivalent of Euro V emission norms a while ago, India has been lagging behind. The experience of countries such as China and Malaysia shows that poor air quality can be bad for business. Therefore, these reforms can put India ahead in the race for investments too.
- First, there are questions about the ability of oil marketing companies to quickly upgrade fuel quality from BS-III and BS-IV standards to BS-VI, which is likely to cost upwards of Rs 40,000 crore.
- Second, and more challenging, is the task of getting auto firms to make the leap. Automakers have clearly said that going to BS-VI directly would leave them with not enough time to design changes in their vehicles, considering that two critical components — diesel particulate filter and selective catalytic



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reduction module — would have to be adapted to India's peculiar conditions, where running speeds are much lower than in Europe or the US.

120 castes have been notified in Central OBC list in last 3 years

- The Government of India notifies inclusion of castes/communities in the Central List of Other Backward Classes for different States/Union Territories on the basis of advice tendered by National Commission for Backward Classes (NCBC) under Section 9(1) of the NCBC Act, 1993.
- The NCBC determines inclusion or otherwise of castes/communities in the Central List of OBCs on the basis of norms established w.r.t. social, educational, economic, representation in Central Services and Miscellaneous parameters.
- A total of 120 entries containing castes, their synonyms and sub-castes have been notified in the Central List of Other Backward Classes in the last three years.
- This information was given by Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Shri Krishan Pal Gurjar in a written reply in Lok Sabha on 3rd April.

Cancellation of NGOs Registration

- Registration of more than 14000 Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have been cancelled during the last four years under The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010. The institution/state-wise details are available on the website www.fcraonline.nic.in of the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- The complaints received in this regard from the Non Governmental Organisation (NGOs) are examined and redressed in this Ministry as per the provisions of the FCRA, 2010 and the Rules made there under.
- This was stated by the Minister of State for Home Affairs, Shri Kiren Rijiju in a written reply to a question in the Lok Sabha On 3rd April.

NIRF India Rankings 2018

- The Union Minister of Human Resource Development, Shri Prakash Javadekar, released the NIRF India Rankings 2018 in various categories on the basis of performance of Higher Educational Institutions in a programme held in New Delhi on 3rd April.
- Minister of State Human Resource Development, Dr. Satya Pal Singh released the report on the NIRF Rankings during the event. 69 top institutions in 9 categories were given awards at event.
- Speaking on the occasion, Shri Prakash Javadekar said that the idea behind these rankings is to promote quality in education and encourage competition to perform better and to set up new benchmarks of performance in Higher education space.
- The Minister said that to promote quality education, we are providing support for setting up and upgrading of 10 public and 10 private Institutions of Eminence (IOEs) so as to enable them to reach amongst top 100 of world institutions ranking.



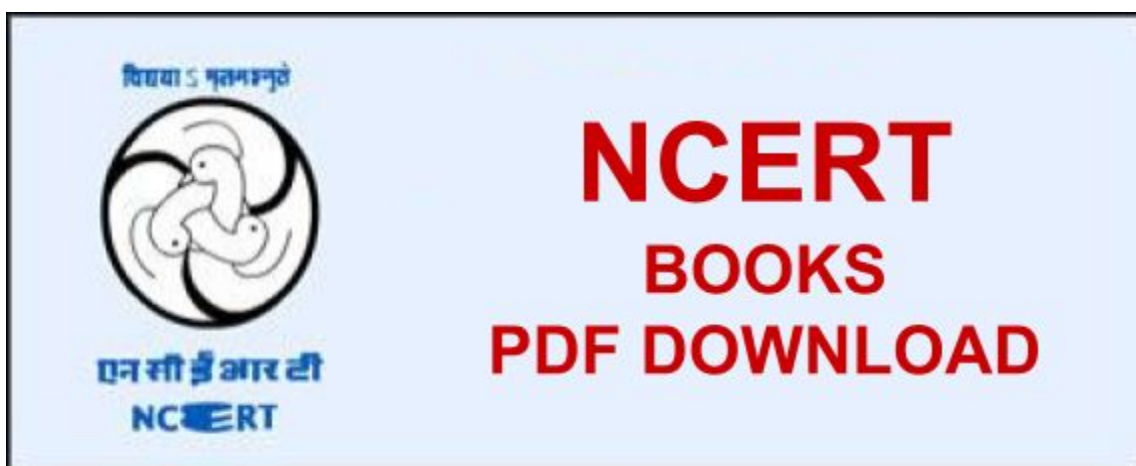
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- The list of 20 IOEs will be released soon. He further said that various initiatives of the HRD Ministry like GIAN, RUSA, SWAYAM, SWAYAM Prabha, TEQUIP III, Smart India Hackathon, etc are in direction to further boost the Quality, Research and Innovation in education.
- In this third edition of India Rankings, a total of 2809 institutions have participated in 9 categories. Collectively they have submitted 3954 distinct profiles, some in multiple disciplines/categories.
- This includes 301 Universities, 906 Engineering Institutions, 487 Management Institutions, 286 Pharmacy Institutions, 71 Law Institutions, 101 Medical Institutions, 59 Architecture Institutions and 1087 General Degree Colleges.

BS-VI fuel in Delhi from April 2018

- The Central government decided to proactively advance the roll-out of BS-VI fuel in Delhi from April 2018, instead of April 2020 after taking stock of the alarming pollution situation in Delhi in winters.
- BS-VI fuel will bring down sulphur by 5 times from the current BS-IV levels – this is an 80 percent reduction which makes it extremely clean. It will improve emissions from the existing fleet, even from the older vehicles on road.
- BS-VI is as clean as CNG or even cleaner than CNG in some respects Pradhan said today at the launch of BS-VI compliant automotive fuels in Delhi and added we plan to extend the availability of these fuels across the country by 1st April 2020.
- According to a Centre for Science & Environment study, air pollution takes 10,000-30,000 lives in Delhi every year. We believe that early migration to BS-VI fuels in the National Capital of Delhi will help in saving thousands of precious lives by bringing down vehicular pollution significantly.
- Government of India is trying to contribute towards solving the problem of pollution due to agricultural stubble burning and other causes by implementing 2G Ethanol plants, increasing share of gas in primary energy basket from 6% to 15%, initiating 9th Gas Development Bidding Round, Unbundling of Gas sector to promote Gas-based Economy and other measures for Cleaner Fuel.
- With the introduction of BS-VI, India joins the small list of Asia - Pacific nations - Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, Philippines and China. China is using it only for heavy vehicles.

6 Central Universities approved for starting Yoga Department

- The following Central Universities have been identified to start the Yoga Department from the academic session 2016-17:
- 1. Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna Garhwal University, 2. Visva Bharati, 3. Central University of Rajasthan, 4. Central University of Kerala, 5. Indira Gandhi National Tribal University and 6. Manipur University.
- University Grants Commission has already conveyed the approval for starting the Yoga Department in these Central Universities. Among the Central Universities which have been sanctioned Yoga Department, Indira Gandhi National Tribal University is situated in Madhya Pradesh.



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- This information was given by the Minister of State (HRD), Dr. Satya Pal Singh in a written reply to a Lok Sabha question on 2nd April.

Approval of enhancing the scope of Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana

- 'Recently ,the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, has given its approval for enhancing the scope of Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY).
- The Government of India will now contribute the Employer's full admissible contribution for the first three years from the date of registration of the new employee for all the sectors including existing beneficiaries for their remaining period of three years.
- The informal sector workers would get social safety net and there would be more job creation. Till now, the scheme has produced quite encouraging results and have added about 31 Lakhs beneficiaries to the formal employment involving an expenditure of more than Rs. 500 crore.
- PMRPY has been in operation since August, 2016. In this scheme, Government is paying the 8.33% contribution of Employers to the Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS) in respect of new employees (who have joined on or after 1st April 2016) having a new Universal Account Number (UAN), with salary up to Rs. 15,000/- per month.
- The scheme has a dual benefit i.e. on the one hand the employers are incentivized for increasing the employment base of workers in the establishments, and on the other hand a large number of workers will find jobs in such establishments. A direct benefit is that these workers will have access to social security benefits of the organized sector.

Electoral Bond Scheme 2018

- Government of India has notified the Electoral Bond Scheme 2018 vide Gazette Notification No. 20 dated 02nd January 2018. As per provisions of the Scheme, Electoral Bonds may be purchased by a person, who is a citizen of India or incorporated or established in India.
- A person being an individual can buy Electoral Bonds, either singly or jointly with other individuals. Only the Political Parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 (43 of 1951) and which secured not less than one per cent of the votes polled in the last General Election to the House of the People or the Legislative Assembly of the State, shall be eligible to receive the Electoral Bonds.
- The Electoral Bonds shall be encashed by an eligible Political Party only through a Bank account with the Authorized Bank.
- State Bank of India (SBI), in the 2nd Phase of sale, has been authorised to issue and encash Electoral Bonds through its 11 Authorised Branches (as per list enclosed) w.e.f. 02.04.2018 to 10.04.2018.
- It may be noted that Electoral Bonds shall be valid for fifteen days from the date of issue and no payment shall be made to any payee Political Party if the Electoral Bond is deposited after expiry of the



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validity period. The Electoral Bond deposited by an eligible Political Party in its account shall be credited on the same day.

Union Cabinet approves rightsizing the Competition Commission of India

- On 4th April the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval for rightsizing the Competition Commission of India (CCI) from One Chairperson and Six Members to One Chairperson and Three Members by not filling the existing vacancies of two Members and one more additional vacancy, which is expected in September, 2018 when one of the present incumbents will complete his term.
- The proposal is expected to result in reduction of three Posts of Members of the Commission in pursuance of the Government's objective of "Minimum Government - Maximum Governance".
- As part of the Government's objective of easing the mergers and amalgamation process in the country, the Ministry had revised the minimum levels in 2017, which have been made applicable for all forms of combinations and the methodology for computing assets and turnover of the target involved in such combinations, has been spelt out.
- This has led to reduction in the notices that enterprises are mandated to submit to the Commission, while entering into combinations, thereby reducing the load on the Commission.
- The faster turnaround in hearings is expected to result in speedier approvals, thereby stimulating the business processes of corporates and resulting in greater employment opportunities in the country.
- The proposal is expected to result in reduction of three Posts of Members of the Commission in pursuance of the Government's objective of "Minimum Government - Maximum Governance".
- Section 8(1) of the Competition Act, 2002 (the Act) provides that the Commission shall consist of a Chairperson and not less than two and not more than six Members. Presently, the Chairperson and four Members are in position.
- An initial limit of one Chairperson and not more than ten Members was provided in the Act, keeping in view the requirement of creating a Principal Bench, other Additional Bench or Mergers Bench, comprising at least two Members each, in places as notified by the Central Government. In the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007 (39 of 2007), Section 22 of the Act was amended removing the provision for creation of Benches.
- In the same Amendment Act, while the Competition Appellate Tribunal comprising one Chairperson and two Members was created, the size of the Commission itself was not commensurately reduced and was kept at one Chairperson and not less than two but not more than six Members.
- The Commission has been functioning as a collegium right from its inception. In several major jurisdictions such as in Japan, USA and U.K. Competition Authorities are of a similar size.



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The Protection of Human Rights (Amendments) Bill, 2018

On 4th April the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has given its approval to the Protection of Human Rights (Amendments) Bill, 2018 for better protection and promotion of human rights in the country.

Salient Features:

- It proposes to include “National Commission for Protection of Child Rights” as deemed Member of the Commission;
- It proposes to add a woman Member in the composition of the Commission;
- It proposes to enlarge the scope of eligibility and scope of selection of Chairperson, National Human Rights Commission as well as the State Human Rights Commission; and
- It proposes to incorporate a mechanism to look after the cases of human rights violation in the Union Territories.
- It proposes to amend the term of office of Chairperson and Members of National Human Rights Commission and State Human Rights Commission to make it in consonance with the terms of Chairperson and Members of other Commissions.
- The Amendment will strengthen the Human Rights Institutions of India further for effective discharge of their mandates, roles and responsibilities. Moreover, the amended Act will be in perfect sync with the agreed global standards and benchmarks towards ensuring the rights relating to life, liberty, equality and dignity of the individual in the country.
- The amendment to the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993 will make National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and State Human Rights Commission (SHRC) more compliant with the Paris Principle concerning its autonomy, independence, pluralism and wide-ranging functions in order to effectively protect and promote human rights.



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India –USA: Status of Nuclear Cooperation Agreement

- During discussions between Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL) and M/s Westinghouse Electric Company (WEC) for setting up six units of AP-1000 (6 x 1208 MWe) reactors at Kovvada, Andhra Pradesh, M/s WEC has expressed willingness to continue with the proposed project in India. Further progress in these discussions will depend upon finalization of techno-commercial aspects of the project acceptable to the Indian side and upon establishing the viability of the project.
- In this regard, a Techno-Commercial Offer has been submitted by M/s WEC to NPCIL, on which negotiations have been initiated. Further progress in the negotiation will also depend on the operation of reference plant of the above design in U.S.
- This information was provided by the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Development of North-Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh in written reply to a question in Lok Sabha

South-North Korea Summit

- On 29th March The two Koreas set a date for a rare inter-Korean summit, following a high-level meeting that was held days after the nuclear-armed North's leader Kim Jong Un made his international debut with a surprise trip to China.
- The landmark meeting between South Korea's President Moon Jae-in and North Korea President Kim Jong Un will take place on April 27 at Freedom House on the southern side of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).



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- The South and North Korea agreed to hold the '2018 South-North summit' on April 27 at the South's Peace House in Panmunjom. The meeting between Kim Jong Un, leader of nuclear-armed North Korea, and the South's President will be only the third of its kind, and will be followed by landmark talks with US President Donald Trump which could come as early as May.

U.S.-Russia relations worsened

- Russia on March 29th decided to hit back at Western expulsion of its diplomats, worsening the already strained relations. Sixty U.S. diplomats will be expelled from Russia – the same as the number of Russian diplomats whom Washington has expelled and the U.S. consulate in St. Petersburg closed.
- Ties between Russia and the West were already rocky, over Moscow's roles in the wars in Syria and Ukraine, its forcible annexation of Crimea, its meddling in elections in the U.S. and elsewhere, the assassination of Kremlin foes in Russia and abroad, cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns against other countries and what Western officials have described as a broad, largely covert effort to destabilize and discredit liberal democracies.

India and the world

India, Japan, and the US hold the 9th trilateral meeting

- Connectivity, counter-terrorism, and freedom of navigation were among the various issues discussed during the 9th India-Japan-US trilateral meeting held in New Delhi recently.
- The meeting comes a fortnight before a summit between American president Donald Trump and Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe at Mar-a-Lago, Trump's Florida resort.
- The Indian team was led by Munu Mahawar, JS Americas and Pranay Verma, JS East Asia, in the Ministry of External Affairs, while the US team was jointly led by Alice Wells, principal deputy assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian Affairs and Susan Thornton, acting assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs.
- The Japanese team was headed by Satoshi Suzuki, director general foreign policy bureau of the ministry of foreign affairs.

India has overtaken Japan to become the world's second-largest producer of crude steel

- In a major achievement, India has overtaken Japan to become the world's second-largest producer of crude steel in February, according to the Steel Users Federation of India (SUFI). At present, China is the largest producer of crude steel in the world, accounting for more than 50% of the production. India's crude steel production was up 4.4% and stood at 93.11 million tonnes (MT) for the period April 2017 to February 2018, compared with April 2016 to February 2017.



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- India overtook the U.S. in 2015 to become the third largest producer of crude steel. Attributing the growth in steel production to the policies undertaken by the government, Nikunj Turakhia, president, SUFI said, "The government has taken a host of steps to curb imports, push local demand with initiatives like 'Make in India', and implement GST and infrastructure projects, to encourage the domestic market." According to the World Steel Association, India produced 8.4 MT of crude steel in February 2018, up 3.4% over February 2017.

India, Azerbaijan committed to strengthening ties in trade, connectivity, tourism

- After calling on Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev on 4th April, External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said the two countries were committed to strengthening ties in a range of issues including trade and investment, connectivity and transportation, culture and tourism etc.
- Swaraj, who is on a three-day visit to the country, landed in capital city Baku on 4th April. She also held talks with her Azerbaijan counterpart Mammadyarov and is expected to represent India at a ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement over the next two days. This is her first bilateral visit to the country.
- "We had fruitful discussions that brought out the high-level of commitment on both sides to strengthening the relationship for the mutual benefit of the peoples of both countries," Swaraj said after meeting the President.

India-Afghanistan : cooperation in the field of food safety and related areas

- On 4th April the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved the signing of a Cooperation Arrangement between Food Safety & Standards Authority of India (FSSAI), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoH & FW) and Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation & Livestock (MAIL), Afghanistan for cooperation in the field of Food Safety and related areas.
- The areas of cooperation include the following:
- Establishment of a mechanism of information exchange and communication;
- Facilitating technical exchange on identified topics of interest especially about import procedures, quality control operations, sampling, testing, packaging and labeling;
- Facilitating/organization of joint seminars, workshops, visits, lectures, training programme, etc;
- Other areas of interest to the participants within their responsibilities as they may mutually determine.
- The cooperation arrangement will facilitate information sharing training and capacity building measure and learning from each others best practice to improve food safety ecosystem.



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BUSINESS AND ECONOMY



BUSINESS & ECONOMY Current Affairs

RBI bars banks to deal with virtual currencies

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has asked banks to stop providing service to any entity dealing with virtual currencies, with immediate effect. Regulated entities that are already providing such services should exit the relationship within three months.
- RBI also said it would explore introducing digital currency and had formed an interdepartmental group to study and provide guidance on the desirability and feasibility to introduce a central bank digital currency. The report will be submitted by end-June 2018.
- Despite numerous advantages and user friendly processes, cryptocurrencies have their own set of associated risks in the form of volatility in valuation, lack of liquidity, security and many more.
- Cryptocurrencies are being denounced in many countries because of their use in grey and black markets. There are two sets of interconnected risks; one being to the growth and expansion of these platforms in the uncertain policy environment, and the other being the risks these platforms pose to the users and the security of the state.
- They also have the potential use for Illicit Trade and Criminal Activities and can be used for Terror Financing.
- They also have the Potential for Tax Evasion.

MoU between HDFC Bank and Indian Army

- A Memorandum of Undertaking (MoU) was signed between the Indian Army and HDFC Bank on the Defence Salary Package on 03 Apr 2018.



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- The first MoU between HDFC Bank and the Indian Army was signed in 2011 and was renewed on 13 Mar 2015. The current MoU is tailor made to suit the requirements of serving soldiers, pensioners and families.
- The signing in ceremony was chaired by the Director General (MP&PS), Lt Gen S K Saini and was attended by the top dignitaries of HDFC Bank headed by Ms Smita Bhagat, Head Government Business and Branch Banking.
- Currently Indian Army has MoUs on Defence Salary Package with 11 public and private sector banks. MoUs are considered for inception and renewal with banks on analyzing their utility and suitability to the requirements of serving soldiers, pensioners and families.
- Army is hoping that this MoU will benefit a large number of serving and retired Army personnel who are having their accounts with HDFC bank; and also provide them an opportunity to access modern banking facilities.
- Under the current MoU apart from other benefits the Army personnel will get free personal accident death cover and free permanent disability cover of Rs 30 lakhs, free educational cover of upto Rs 1 Lakh per year for four years for education of dependent child in case of accidental death of defence personnel and 100% processing fees waived for Car Loans and Personal Loans.

Index of Eight Core Industries :February, 2018

- The Eight Core Industries comprise 40.27 per cent of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP). The combined Index of Eight Core Industries stands at 123.1 in February, 2018, which was 5.3 per cent higher as compared to the index of February, 2017. Its cumulative growth during April to February, 2017-18 was 4.3 per cent.
- Coal-Coal production (weight: 10.33 per cent) increased by 1.4 per cent in February, 2018 over February, 2017. Its cumulative index increased by 1.6 per cent during April to February, 2017-18 over corresponding period of the previous year.
- Crude Oil- Crude Oil production (weight: 8.98 per cent) declined by 2.4 per cent in February, 2018 over February, 2017. Its cumulative index declined by 0.8 per cent during April to February, 2017-18 over the corresponding period of previous year.
- Natural Gas- The Natural Gas production (weight: 6.88 per cent) declined by 1.5 per cent in February, 2018 over February, 2017. Its cumulative index increased by 3.1 per cent during April to February, 2017-18 over the corresponding period of previous year.
- Refinery Products-Petroleum Refinery production (weight: 28.04 per cent) increased by 7.8 per cent in February, 2018 over February, 2017. Its cumulative index increased by 4.9 per cent during April to February, 2017-18 over the corresponding period of previous year.
- Fertilizers-Fertilizers production (weight: 2.63 per cent) increased by 5.3 per cent in February, 2018 over February, 2017. Its cumulative index declined by 0.2 per cent during April to February, 2017-18 over the corresponding period of previous year.



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- Steel-Steel production (weight: 17.92 per cent) increased by 5.0 per cent in February, 2018 over February, 2017. Its cumulative index increased by 5.9 per cent during April to February, 2017-18 over the corresponding period of previous year.
- Cement- Cement production (weight: 5.37 per cent) increased by 22.9 per cent in February, 2018 over February, 2017. Its cumulative index increased by 5.7 per cent during April to February, 2017-18 over the corresponding period of previous year.
- Electricity-Electricity generation (weight: 19.85 per cent) increased by 4.0 per cent in February, 2018 over February, 2017. Its cumulative index increased by 5.2 per cent during April to February, 2017-18 over the corresponding period of previous year.

Enhancement of Gratuity Limit

- The Government has issued Notification the same day wherein gratuity limit has been increased from Rs.10 lakhs to Rs.20 lakhs under the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972.
- The Government has also issued another Notification on the same day wherein it has also increased the maximum period of maternity leave in case of female employees to be counted as continuous service from 12 weeks to 26 weeks under the Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972.
- Representations from various stakeholders have been received in the Ministry. The Ministry had also organised tripartite consultations on 23.02.2017 with all stakeholders including representatives of employers and employees, who supported the proposal.
- The provision contained in the amended Payment of Gratuity Act, 1972 have been implemented w.e.f. from 29.03.2018.
- This information was given by Shri Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Union Minister of State (I/C) for Labour and Employment in written reply to a question in Rajya Sabha on 4th April.

Sports

Sanjita Chanu wins India's 2nd gold at XXI CWG 2018

- Indian weightlifter Sanjita Chanu won gold in the women's 53kg category at the 2018 Commonwealth Games on 5th April. The Manipuri star lifted a total of 192 kgs which included a CWG record of 84 kgs in the snatch and 108 kgs in clean and jerk.
- Defending champion Loa Dika Toua of Papua New Guinea was a distant second with 182 kgs while Canada's Rachel Leblanc-Bazinet took bronze with 181 kgs.
- This was India's second gold at the Gold Coast Games. Fellow Manipuri weightlifter Mirabai Chanu had won gold with spectacular record-breaking attempts in the women's 48kg. Sanjita was by far the most dominant competitor in both snatch and clean and jerk.
- She took the lead in the snatch with an opening attempt of 81 kgs.



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CWG 2018: Weightlifter Sathish Sivalingam Clinches Gold Medal in weightlifting

- India continued to go strong at the Commonwealth Games 2018 weightlifting events with Sathish Kumar Sivalingam bringing the country its third gold medal, in the men's 77-kg category and extending India's medal tally to five.
- He finished with a total effort of 317 kg (144kg snatch+173kg clean and jerk). Such was his domination that Sathish did not even require a third attempt at clean and jerk.
- Sathish finished with a total effort of 317 kg (144kg snatch+173kg clean and jerk) to bring India's third gold medal at 2018 CWG
- His snatch attempts comprised impressive lifts worth 136kg, 140kg and 144kg
- Such was his domination that Sathish did not even require a third attempt at clean and jerk.



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SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY



16th International Energy Forum (IEF)

- India is hosting the 16th International Energy Forum (IEF) Ministerial Meeting in New Delhi. The IEF Ministerial meetings are informal dialogues, at both the political and technical levels, aimed to improve policy and investment decisions, and through increased knowledge and experience sharing.
- The biennial IEF Ministerial Meetings are the world's largest gathering of Energy Ministers who engage in a dialogue on global energy issues. It serves as a neutral facilitator of informal, open, informed and continuing global energy dialogue among its members comprising of energy producing and energy consuming states, including transit countries.
- By virtue of being among the top 11 largest consumers of oil and gas (India is presently 4th), India has been the Permanent Member of the Executive Board since its set-up in 2002.
- India had earlier hosted the 5th IEF Ministerial in 1996 at Goa.
- The Executive Board (EB) set up in 2002 comprising of 31 designated representatives of Ministers of the member states comprise the governing board of IEF.
- Energy security continues to top the political agenda for energy importing as well as exporting countries, for industrialized as well as developing economies.
- This has prompted some to re-think fundamental policies. And the policy tuning of one country to meet new challenges and to reduce its particular energy uncertainties can in itself exacerbate uncertainties or create new ones for others.



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ISRO has successfully launched GSAT-6A satellite

- India's Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-F08) successfully launched GSAT-6A Satellite into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO) on March 29. Launch of GSLV was its twelfth and took place from the Second Launch Pad at Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC) SHAR, Sriharikota, the spaceport of India. This is the fifth consecutive success achieved by GSLV carrying indigenously developed Cryogenic Upper Stage.
- In its oval shaped GTO, GSAT-6A is now orbiting the Earth with a perigee (nearest point to Earth) of 169.4 km and an apogee (farthest point to Earth) of 36,692.5 km with an orbital inclination of 20.64 deg with respect to the equator.
- Few seconds before the launch countdown reached zero, the four liquid propellant strap-on motors of GSLV-F08, each with nearly 43 tons of liquid propellants, were ignited. At count zero and after confirming the normal performance of all the four strap-on motors, the 139 ton solid propellant first stage core motor was ignited and GSLV lifted off at 16:56 IST, as scheduled. The major phases of the flight occurred as intended. About seventeen and a half minutes after lift-off, GSAT-6A was successfully placed in GTO.
- Soon after separation from GSLV, the two solar arrays of GSAT-6A were automatically deployed in quick succession and the Master Control Facility (MCF) at Hassan in Karnataka assumed control of the satellite.
- GSAT-6A is a communication satellite built by ISRO to provide mobile communication services through multi beam coverage. For this, it is equipped with S and C band transponders.
- In the coming days, the orbit of GSAT-6A will be raised from its present GTO to the final circular Geostationary Orbit (GSO) by firing the satellite's Liquid Apogee Motor (LAM) in stages. The Satellite will be commissioned into service after the completion of orbit raising operations and its positioning in the designated slot in GSO following in-orbit testing of its payloads.

Advanced Supersonic Parachute Inflation Research Experiment (ASPIRE)

- A supersonic parachute that will help NASA missions to land on Mars, was successfully launched into the sky during a key test designed to mimic the conditions of entering the red planet. The Advanced Supersonic Parachute Inflation Research Experiment (ASPIRE) was launched aboard a sounding rocket from NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in the US.
- An ambitious NASA Mars rover mission set to launch in 2020 will rely on a special parachute to slow the spacecraft down as it enters the Martian atmosphere at over 12,000 mph (5.4 kilometers per second). The Mars 2020 mission will seek signs of ancient Martian life by investigating evidence in place and by caching drilled samples of Martian rocks for potential future return to Earth.



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Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan

- The Ministry of Human Resource Development has launched the Rashtriya Avishkar Abhiyan (RAA), a convergent framework across School Education and Higher Education aiming to encourage children towards learning Science and Mathematics and to develop their interest through activities related to Science and Mathematics.
- One of the interventions under RAA is strengthening of school Science and Mathematics laboratories, through the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA). Further, under RMSA, important interventions i.e. Science Fair/Exhibition and Talent Search at district level; mathematics and science kits to schools, visit to higher institutions of students and learning enhancement of students have been approved.
- Under RMSA, an amount of Rs. 179.73 crore has been approved in 2017-18, for in-service training of science and maths teachers, remedial teaching, provision of science and maths kits, science exhibitions, etc.
- NITI Aayog under the Atal Innovation Mission is establishing Atal Tinkering Laboratories (ATLs) in schools across India. The objective of this scheme is to foster curiosity, creativity and imagination in young minds; and inculcate skills such as design mindset, computational thinking, adaptive learning, physical computing etc.
- Till date, 2441 schools have been selected across the country to establish ATL. There is no proposal in UGC at present to increase the number of research fellowships.
- This information was given by the Minister of State (HRD), Shri Upendra Kushwaha today in a written reply to a Lok Sabha question on 2nd April.

India's Mission on Moon and Mars

- Chandrayaan-2 is a totally indigenous mission with Orbiter, Lander and rover configuration. Orbiter is to be placed in 100 km orbit around the Moon. After reaching the 100 km lunar orbit, the Lander will be separated from the orbiter and it will soft land on the lunar surface and deploy a Rover.
- The Rover will then move around the landing site. The Orbiter will continue to orbit around the Moon and perform remote-sensing observations of the lunar surface.
- ISRO has formed a study team to formulate plans to explore solar system bodies. The study team has recommended a future mission to Mars. Scientific proposals for payloads are selected by an expert committee.
- The Orbiter will study the Moon for its topography, elemental and mineralogical distribution and extent of subsurface water ice. The lander will land on the lunar surface and demonstrate ISRO's capability for landing on Moon. Subsequently, the Rover will roll out of the Lander and move around the landing site.
- The lander and rover payloads will conduct observations on the elemental composition and study the lunar ionosphere. The Chandrayaan-2 mission will definitely expand the scientific knowledge on Moon



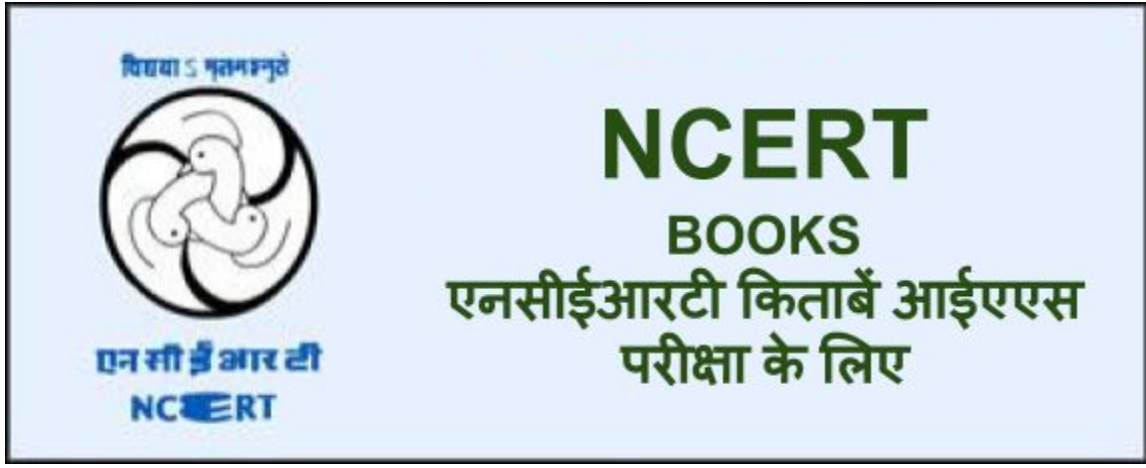
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by remote-sensing from Orbiter and in-situ studies from lander/rover. Total expenditure on the mission is around Rs 800 Cr.

- Mission planning for next MARS mission is under progress. This information was provided by the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Development of North-Eastern Region (DoNER), MoS PMO, Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, Atomic Energy and Space, Dr Jitendra Singh in written reply to a question in Lok Sabha.

MCQ



Q1. Consider the following statement about Petroleum & explosive safety organization (PESO)

1. It functions under the Department of Industrial policy & promotion (DIPP).
2. Its function is to control and administer the usage of explosives & petrol stations in India.
3. It is headquartered at Delhi.

Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 & 2 only
- c. 2 & 3 only
- d. All of the above.

ANSWER-b



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Q2. Consider the following statement about composite scheme under GST

1. It is an alternative method of levy of tax designed for small tax payers.
2. Under this tax payers have to file single return & pay the tax on quarterly basis
3. Firms which opt for inter-state outward supplies of goods are not eligible

Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 & 2 only
- c. 1, 2 & 3 only
- d. 1 & 3 only

ANSWER-c

Q3. Which of the following institute publish External Sector Report

- a. World bank
- b. International monetary fund (IMF)
- c. OECD
- d. World economic forum

ANSWER-b

Q4. 'MIKE' is an International Initiative for the protecting and conserving which of the following animal.

- a. Tiger
- b. One horn-Rhinoceros
- c. Elephant
- d. Swamp deer

ANSWER-c

Q5. Consider the following statements about 'Innovate in India (i3)'



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1. It will be implemented by Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) a PSU of Biotechnology department
2. It is launched by Indian government in collaboration with World Bank.
3. It is part of National Biopharma Mission.
4. It is launched to create a competitive ecosystem to bring innovation in software industry.

Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct

- a. 1 & 2 only
- b. 2 & 4 only
- c. 1 & 3 only
- d. 1, 2 & 3 only

ANSWER-d

Q6. Consider the following statement regarding National food security act, 2013

1. It mandates providing of subsidized food grains to targeted households with a ceiling of 75% of the population in rural areas and 50% in urban areas.
2. The beneficiaries are chosen by both Centre governments & state government.

Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct.

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both
- d. None

ANSWER-a

Q7. Consider the following statement regarding Crime and Criminal Tracking Networks and Systems

1. It is a project under Indian government for creating a comprehensive and integrated system for effective policing through e-Governance.
2. The project is implemented by National Crime Record Bureau.



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Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct.

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

ANSWER-c

Q8. Yemen do not share its boundaries with which of the following countries/water bodies?

- a. Saudi Arabia
- b. Oman
- c. Gulf of Oman
- d. Red Sea

ANSWER-c

Q9. Consider the following statement about Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC)

- 1. Financial Stability and Development Council is a statutory body
- 2. The Council is chaired by Union Finance minister

Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct.

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both
- d. None

ANSWER-b

Q10. Bharat 22 is seen in news recently, it is related to

- a. Exchange traded fund
- b. Unmanned aircraft vehicle developed by HAL.



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- c. Joint exercise of Navy & Air force.
- d. Mobile app launched by Indian Postal department

ANSWER-a

Q11. Consider the following statement about International Atomic Energy Agency.

- 1. It is an autonomous international organization within the United Nations system
- 2. It is headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland.
- 3. India is a member of IAEA.

Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct.

- a. 1 only
- b. 1, 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1 and 2 only

ANSWER-c

Q12. Consider the following statement about Global Entrepreneurship Summit (GES) held in India in November 2017.

- 1. It was the first Global Entrepreneurship Summit held in South Asia
- 2. The theme was "Women first, prosperity for all".
- 3. Indian Chamber of commerce was the lead Indian agency in holding the event in partnership with the state government of Telangana.

Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct.

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 & 2 only
- c. 2 & 3 only
- d. All of the above

ANSWER-b



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Q13. Consider the following statement about Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana.

1. Department of Agriculture, Co-operation and Farmers Welfare under Ministry of Agriculture and farmers Welfare is nodal agency for implementing.
2. It have provision for Interlinking of rivers
3. There is also provision for Linking PMKSY with the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment.

Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct.

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 & 2 only
- c. 2 & 3 only
- d. All of the above

ANSWER-c

Q14. Consider the following statement about Polymetallic nodules

1. They are also called manganese nodules
2. They contain Rare Earth Elements and metals.
3. They are found only in Arctic Ocean & Indian Ocean.

Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct.

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 & 3 only
- c. 1 & 2 only
- d. All of the above

ANSWER-c

Q15. Which of the following are bio-indicator.

1. Lichens
2. Algae Blooms



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3. Frogs

4. Sparrow

Choose the correct answer using below codes

a. 1 only

b. 1 & 2 only

c. 1, 2 & 3 only

d. All of the above

ANSWER-d

Q16. Bellandur lake was seen in news recently, it is located in

a. Pune

b. Ernakulam

c. Bangalore

d. Kozhikode

ANSWER-c

Q17. Consider the following statement about electronic cigarettes

1. There is Uniform Standard regulation in place to restrict the use of electronic cigarettes throughout India

2. Electronic Cigarettes do not contain nicotine.

Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct.

a. 1 only

b. 2 only

c. Both

d. None

ANSWER-d

Q18. Consider the following statement about Delimitation Commission



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1. It is statutory body constituted after a census
2. It redistribute the representation from each state
3. Its order have force of law & cannot be questioned before any court except supreme court

Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct.

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 & 2 only
- c. 2 & 3 only
- d. 1, 2 & 3.

ANSWER-a

Q19. Consider the following statements about the agreement on Trade, Commerce & Transit between India & Bhutan

1. It provide free trade regime between India & Bhutan.
2. It also provide for duty free transit of Bhutanese merchandise for trade with third countries.

Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct.

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both
- d. None

ANSWER-c

Q20. Consider the following about Index of Industrial Production

1. It measure the growth in Manufacturing, mining & electricity sector
2. It is published by Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion.
3. The base year of new series is 2011-12
4. 8 core industries have weightage of more than 50%.



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Which of the following statement(s) is/are correct.

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 & 3 only
- c. 1, 2 & 3
- d. 1, 2 & 4

ANSWER-b

IMPORTANT ARTICLES FROM VARIOUS NEWSPAPERS



PSLV-C41 successfully launches IRNSS-1I navigation satellite

- In its forty third flight, ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle PSLV-C41 successfully launched the 1,425 kg IRNSS-1I Navigation Satellite today from Satish Dhawan Space Centre SHAR, Sriharikota.
- PSLV-C41 lifted off at 0404 hrs (4:04 am) IST, as planned, from the First Launch Pad. After a flight lasting about 19 minutes, the vehicle achieved a Sub-Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit with a perigee (nearest point to earth) of 281.5 km and an apogee (farthest point to earth) of 20,730 km inclined at an angle of 19.2 degree to the equator following which IRNSS-1I separated from PSLV.
- After separation, the solar panels of IRNSS-1I were deployed automatically. ISRO's Master Control Facility (MCF) at Hassan, Karnataka took over the control of the satellite. In the coming days, orbit manoeuvres will be performed from MCF to position the satellite at 55 deg East longitude in the planned Geosynchronous Orbit with an inclination of 29 deg to the equator.



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- IRNSS-1I is the latest member of the 'Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC)' system. NavIC, also known as Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), is an independent regional navigation satellite system designed to provide position information in the Indian region and 1,500 km around the Indian mainland.
- A number of ground facilities responsible for IRNSS satellite ranging and monitoring, generation and transmission of navigation parameters, satellite control, network timing, etc., have been established in many locations across the country as part of NavIC.
- Till now, PSLV has successfully launched 52 Indian satellites and 237 customer satellites from abroad.

Egyptian Vulture-Vanishing Fast

- The Egyptian Vulture is among the best scavengers and Europe's most threatened vulture species. It is still continuing to decline. If drastic measures are not taken for its protection and conservation, within a few years the condition will get worse. It is a long lived medium-sized raptor feeding upon a large variety of dead animals, including large carcasses, small and medium-size vertebrate and human waste and sometimes hunts for insects, rats and other small aquatic animals. It is distributed throughout southern Europe, northern and central Africa, the Middle East, Transcaucasia, Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent. *Neophron p. percnopterus* and *Neophron p. ginginianus* are found in India and are local migratory species. Also called Pharaoh's Chicken because it is so often seen sculptured on the ancient monuments of Egypt, Egyptian vultures are solitary birds usually seen in pairs and groups at the feeding and roosting sites. Egyptian vultures are thought to be very intelligent. Birds like Lammergeier carry the Ostrich egg, which has a thick shell, into the air and drop it on the ground to break it. But since the Egyptian vultures do not have large feet to raise the egg into the air, they carry the stone into the air and drop it upon the egg in a strong wave of head and neck. This makes them special as only a few animals along with man use tools to achieve their aim.
- Egyptian vultures roost or congregate in groups for hours on trees, monuments, electric towers, and buildings imparting benefits such as increased foraging success, decreased predation or danger, decreased thermoregulatory need etc. Egyptian vultures possess a well defined bill which along with feeding purposes they often use for feather maintenance and preening. Bills are important tools for straightening, oiling and removal of dirt and debris of the body surface. They also exhibit allopreening -a behaviour shown by Egyptian vultures in which one individual cleans the feathers of other individual. It has been reported in many animal groups and among other vulture species too such as Turkey vultures (*Cathartes aura*) and Californian condors (*Gymnogyps californianus*). It reduces the chance of presence of ectoparasites and sometimes it is a form of intra-social interaction.

Opportunistic Feeder

- The Egyptian vulture is one of the best scavenger birds, not only devouring carcasses of dead animals, but also feeding on most types of offal or garbage. It has an opportunistic and diverse diet. Since it has



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a broad diet range, it is not as much susceptible to the poisoned carcass as other old world vulture species. These species can be found anywhere where food is available for them. It often wanders about the streets of villages, looking through the heaps of refuse. Its teeth and claws are much too feeble to enable it to cope with the tearing up of a large carcass, and so never associate with the large vultures and mammals. The Egyptian vulture not only eats dead animals, but also preys upon rats, mice, lizards, tortoises, insects and other pests that swarm in hot countries. It is often observed that as farmers plough up the ground worms, grubs, and similar creatures that are disturbed move on to the surface becoming prey to the Egyptian vultures. Egyptian vultures have also been observed around slaughterhouses and bone mill factories where they feed upon crushed bones and very often seen pecking on cow dung and ' droppings of goats and sheep.

- Egyptian vultures have certain foraging advantages. The face is devoid of hair so the bare skin prevents blood and food from sticking to it. Using its long beak it can easily tear off small pieces of meat left by larger scavengers. It also feeds upon a variety of food available. This increases its survival rate as compare to other vulture's species that look for large and fresh carcass, for example, Red headed vultures. Another advantage is that in addition to the food available for them they also look and hunt for food and sometimes prey upon rats, mice, lizards, tortoises, fish, insects and other pests.

ROLE OF ALLIED SECTOR IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

- Agriculture and allied sector including horticulture, floriculture, sericulture, livestock, bee keeping, forestry & logging, fishery, mining & quarrying etc. play a strategic role in the process of economic development of developing countries like India. During the process of economic development, many structural changes take place in the form of declining share of agriculture & allied sector in national income, output and employment. Indian economy has also witnessed these structural changes particularly after independence. The contribution of primary sector to GDP has steadily declined from 53.71 per cent in 1951 to 17.46 per cent in 2018. However, the declining share of this sector does not undermine its significance in employment generation, foreign exchange earnings and providing food security to the increasing population of the country.
- Agriculture is of so much importance in the Indian economy that any positive or negative change in this sector exerts a significant effect on the entire economy. The large scale industries of the country like sugar, tea, jute, textile (cotton, woolen & silk), paper and food processing etc. directly depend upon agriculture and allied sector for the supply of raw material. On the other hand, agriculture also draws inputs like chemical fertilizers, pesticides, power, agricultural machinery (tractors, harvesters, combines, pump sets), tools and implements from industry. This interdependence between agriculture and industry becomes strengthened through the appropriation and generation of various production and demand linkages in these two sectors. Demand for one sector's product pulls demand for another sector in an upward direction, which results in an increase in trade. Thus agriculture, industry and trade are mutually supporting and complementary to one another.



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Production and Growth of Agriculture & Allied Sector:

- During the planned era of development, India made a remarkable progress in the production of agriculture and allied sector. Foodgrain production in India went up from 50.8 million tonnes in 1950-51 to 275.7 million tonnes in 2016-17 reflecting an annual compound growth rate of 2.60 per cent (Fig. 1). Whereas, the production of cereals shot up nearly by six times, the production of pulses went up by less than three times during the period under reference. It is noteworthy, that foodgrain production in the country witnessed a higher annual compound growth rate (2.60%) as compared to total population (2.19%) during the period from 1951 to 2017. As a result of rapid growth in foodgrain production, per capita per day availability of foodgrains in India increased from 395 gms in 1951 to 506 gms in 2017.
- The diverse agro climatic conditions in India make it possible to grow almost all types of horticultural products like fresh fruits, vegetables, root and tuber crops, flowers, aromatic and medicinal crops, spices and plantation crops. Vegetables are also an important part of horticulture sector. They constitute about 59% of horticulture production in India. In fact India has emerged as the second largest fruit and vegetable producer in the world after China.

Role of Agriculture & Allied Sector:

- Agriculture & Allied Sector play a vital role in Indian Economy. The real gross value added (RGVA) at constant prices by primary sector (including agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining & quarrying) which was to the tune of Rs. 150191 in 1950-51, went up to Rs. 2026660 in 2016-17 registering ACGR of 4.2 per cent. The importance of agriculture and allied sector is brought out by the fact that as per census 2011, of the 313 million main workers in the economy in the country, 166 million (56.6%) were engaged in these activities. Presently, India is not only self-sufficient in food grains but also exports agriculture commodities. Its export of agriculture & allied products (such as rice, pulses, fruits, vegetables, tea, coffee, tobacco, spices, sugar & molasses, cashew, raw cotton, fish, meat and processed food etc.) which were worth Rs. 284 crores in 1960-61, up surged to Rs. 226775 crores in 2016-17 reflecting a high ACGR of 12.67 per cent. India is among the 15 leading exporters of agriculture products in the world. In this arduous journey of the progress of Indian agriculture & allied sector, we braced multi-pronged strategies and technologies such as green revolution, white revolution, blue revolution, yellow revolution, silver revolution, golden revolution, red revolution, round revolution and now poised for rainbow revolution and ultimately to evergreen revolution.

Government Schemes:

- Realising the importance of agriculture & allied sector in the economy of the country, Government of India has taken several steps & measures for its sustainable development. Steps have been taken to improve soil fertility on a sustainable basis through the Soil Health Card Scheme launched by the Government of India in February 2015. Under this scheme, samples of soil are taken and tested in the



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labs to assess the health of soil in the form of presence/absence of required micro-nutrients.

Thereafter, the experts suggest the farmers the measures to improve productivity of their soil through the judicious use of inputs.

- Presently, the net irrigated area in the country is only 68.1 million hectare which is nearly 48% of net sown area. In order to provide improved access to irrigation and enhanced water efficiency, Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana (PMKSY) was launched on 1st July, 2015 with the motto of Har Khet KO Paani. The scheme aims at the expansion of net irrigated area, reduce wastage of water and improve efficiency in the use of water. It also focuses on creating sources for assured irrigation through rainwater harvesting to ensure "more crop-per drop". The scheme was approved with an outlay of Rs. 50,000 crore for a period of 5 years starting from 2015-16 to 2019-20. In 2018-19 budget, a sum of Rs. 2600 crore has been earmarked to boost ground water irrigation in 96 irrigation deprived districts of the country.
- Of late, demand for organically produced food grains, fruits, vegetables and drinks etc. is growing rapidly across the globe. Organic farming relies on the application of fertilizers of organic origin such as compost, vermi-compost, green manure, bio-fertilisers and bio-pesticides. It emphasizes on the techniques of crop rotation and companion planting, mixed cropping and trap crop etc. Indian farmers, with their traditional methods and techniques of farming are poised to encash the immense export potential of organic farming. In order to promote organic farming in the country, a new scheme named Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY) was launched in 2015 by the Union Government. Under this scheme, the willing farmers are required to form a group of minimum 50 farmers with total area of not less than 50 acres. Each farmer enrolling in the scheme is provided a sum Rs. 20,000 (spread over three years) per acres by the government. This fund can be utilized for obtaining agriculture inputs and transporting the produce to the market.
- The main focus of the Union Budget for the financial year 2018-19 is on strengthening and reviving the agriculture and allied sector in the rural economy. The Government is keen to double the income of the farmers by the year 2022, through launching new schemes which encompass farm activities from seed to marketing. To achieve this target, institutional credit to the farm sector has been increased to Rs. 11 lakh crore in 2018-19 as compared to 10 lakh crore of previous year. Operation Greens has been launched to address fluctuations in the price of perishable agriculture produce particularly tomato, onion and potato (TOP). It aims at promoting and augmenting food processing in rural area with a budgetary provision of Rs. 500 crore. In order to strengthen the agriculture marketing network, there is the proposal to set up Agri Market Infrastructure Fund with a corpus of Rs. 2000 crore. It aims at Upgrading and strengthening of existing 22000 rural haats into Gramin Agricultural Markets. Extending the facility of Kisan Credit Card to the farmers engaged in fisheries, aquaculture and animal husbandry, a sum of Rs. 10,000 crore have been allocated to develop this sector. The emphasis is given on creation of rural infrastructure by allocating a sum of Rs. 14.34 lakh crore is also laudable. The failure of crops for consecutive years and low prices of agricultural products have forced the farmers to commit suicides and protests in many states. The Union Budget for 2018-19 promises to fix minimum support



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price for all kharif and rabi crops to guarantee farmers at least 50 per cent returns of their production cost. This decision would ensure assured prices to the farmers and indeed will be helpful to achieve the target of doubling their income within the stipulated period.

- To improve production and productivity of agriculture, adoption of quality inputs including high yield variety seeds is critical. There is an urgent need to expand the area under irrigation by adopting the appropriate technologies like sprinkler, drip irrigation and rainwater harvesting. The rational & efficient use of fertilizers and pesticides is also essential in order to increase productivity and avoid crop yield losses due to pests & diseases. Access to institutional credit at affordable rate is also desired to purchase expensive agricultural inputs. Further, the importance of timely Government intervention in agriculture marketing can also not be denied. Last but not least, providing timely advisory services to farmers to adopt best farm practices and technology through market information system is also essential.

NEW DIMENSIONS OF BLUE REVOLUTION

- India has a coast line of 8118 km, having a huge potential for aquaculture, inland and marine fisheries. Marine Fisheries is the fastest growing food producing sector in the world with great potential to meet the food, especially protein requirement. As per NFDB, India ranked 3rd in fish production and 2nd in aquaculture in the world. Fisheries contribute 1.07 per cent of the total GDP of the country. Further, as per the central plan scheme under the banner of Blue Revolution (Neel Kranti), it has been targeted to enhance the fish production from 107.95 lakh tonnes in 2015-16 to about 15 lakh tonnes by the end of Financial Year 2019-20. It is also expected to augment the export earnings with a focus on increased benefit flow to the fishers and fish farmers to attain the target of doubling their income. This targeted production from fisheries can be achieved by integrated technological interventions from various fields besides blending traditional knowledge and scientific principles.

Biotechnological Interventions:

- Aquatic biotechnology has played a crucial role in promoting productivity, boosting efficiency and ensuring sustainability in aquaculture. The key aspects of culture have been optimized through biotechnological application including enhancement of growth rate and feed conversion efficiency, nutrition and product quality, stress modulation, vaccination, disease resistance, modern disease diagnostics and treatment, genetic selection, transgenesis, etc. The genomics and proteomics have the potential to impart production and management of fish genetic resources. Nano-technology has opened a new horizon for the analysis of biomolecules, development of non-viral vectors for gene therapy as transport vehicle for DNA, protein or cells, targeted drug delivery, clinical diagnosis, disease therapeutics etc.



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- Biotechnological interventions have shown great promises in applying the tools of bioremediation and probiotics in environmental management of effluents, toxicants and pathogens apart from its impact on induced breeding, sea ranching etc.
- Mariculture using biotechnological interventions has immense potential being a lucrative sector worldwide. The potential area of ' biotechnology in mariculture include the use of synthetic hormone (GnRH) in induced breeding, transgenic fish, chromosome engineering, cryopreservation and gene banking, marker assisted genetic improvement and health management. The technical development in transgenesis has expanded the possibilities for producing either sterile fish or those whose reproductive activity can be specifically turned on or off using inducible promoters apart from trait specific gene transfer. Chromosome engineering techniques are important in the improvement of fish breeding as they provide a rapid approach for gonadal sterilization, sex control, and improvement of hybrid viability and cloning.

Way-Forward:

- A six-fold strategy for the comprehensive development of the region has been proposed-
- Empowering people by maximizing self-governance and participatory development through grass-root planning to promote inclusive development.
- Creation of development opportunities for the rural areas through enhancing productivity in agriculture and allied activities such as animal husbandry, horticulture, floriculture, fisheries and generation of livelihood options through rural non-farm employment.
- To develop sectors in the region having a comparative advantage such as agro-processing, hydropower generation.
- Enhancing the skills and competencies of the people and building the capacities for institutions within the Government and outside.
- Creating a hospitable investment climate to encourage investment by the private sector particularly for infrastructure.
- Harnessing the resources of the Government and the private sector to realize the objectives of the Vision.
- The latest event of Global Investors' Summit in Guwahati held on February 3, 2018, itself evinces the sincere approach of the Central Government towards bringing overall prosperity in the NER. The event undoubtedly, showcased the states' investment potential to countries in South and South East Asia, in sectors including manufacturing, services, power, agriculture and food processing, IT, transportation, petrochemicals, pharmaceuticals, textiles and handicrafts and tourism.
- To conclude, innovation, initiatives, ideas and implementation-all the four need to go together. What is needed is inclusive growth through inclusive development with focus on improved governance, doing away with the draconian laws and ensuring that the local communities are empowered to implement



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basic needs and services. For this, all the stakeholders need to formulate an all-comprehensive realistic plan for the . rall development of NE states.



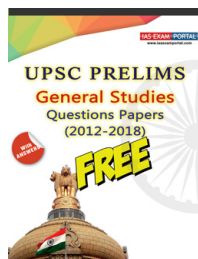
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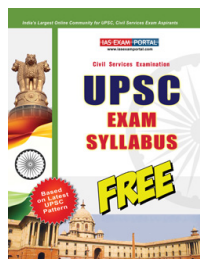
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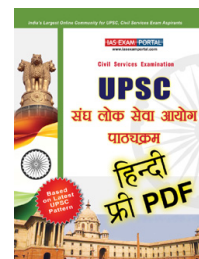
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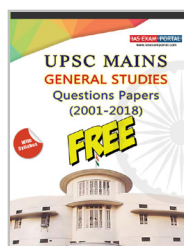
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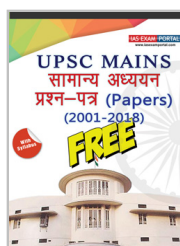
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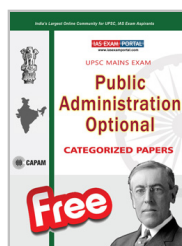
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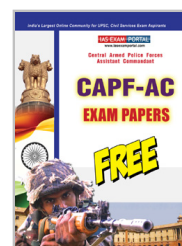
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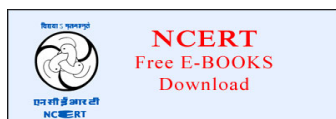
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