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**DECEMBER 1 2017**

**General Studies-02**

**Draft law proposes ban on instant triple talaq, three-year jail term**

**News**

- The Union government has told State governments to **urgently revert to the provisions of a draft law to deal with instant triple talaq** or *Talaq-e-Biddat* that provides for a maximum jail term of three years.

**Beyond News**

- It was planned to introduce the proposed bill in the coming winter session of Parliament that starts on December 15.
- Once the proposed Muslim Woman Protection of Rights on Marriage bill is approved by Parliament, the law will adjudicate all cases of instant triple talaq across the country, except Jammu and Kashmir.

**Provisions:**

- ❖ As per provisions of the draft bill, a husband who resorts to instant triple talaq can be **jailed for up to three years and be fined**. Instant triple talaq in any form oral, written or electronic form has been banned and made a cognizable offence.

The bill also provides for a subsistence allowance of a harassed Muslim woman and her dependent children and the custodial rights of minor children.

**India may join n-project in Bangladesh**

**News**

- Discussions are on for India to join the Russia-led Rooppur nuclear power plant construction in Bangladesh, an official of the Russian atomic power agency Rosatom said.

## Beyond News

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- Russia is building two reactors of 1,200 MW each at Rooppur in Bangladesh and India has expressed its keenness to join the project.
- Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina formally launched the main construction work of the Rooppur plant . **It is the country's first nuclear power plant.**
- As it is not a member of the **48-nation Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)**, India cannot directly take part in the construction of nuclear power plants but **has individual agreements with Bangladesh and Russia.**
- In December 2014, India and Russia signed the “Strategic Vision for Strengthening Cooperation in Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy”, which allows the two sides to “explore opportunities for sourcing materials, equipment and services from Indian industry for the construction of Russian-designed nuclear power plants in third countries”.

## ‘Executive power rests with Centre’

### News

- The Centre completed its arguments in the spat over the administrative governance of the National Capital while underlining that the executive power rested completely with it.

## Beyond News

- A five-judge Bench had orally indicated that there should be a harmonious relationship between the Lieutenant Governor and the Delhi government.
- The court had said that the difference of opinion between the two should not be trivial or contrived. This may run the danger of stonewalling governance in the Capital. The Lieutenant Governor could not stultify proposals or schemes forwarded by the Council of Ministers to him by simply sitting on it

The Delhi government had argued that the **Lieutenant Governor was not a “Viceroy” but simply an agent of the President** whose powers depended on the pleasure of the President.

## General Studies-03

### BG-III cotton: super weeds threat looms large



#### News

- With one more season coming to an end for cotton cultivation as the pickings are in the advanced stage, the fear of spread of super weeds looms large.

#### BG-III cotton

- Monsanto, a US-based multinational seed giant, has developed herbicide-tolerant trait (BG-III) and commercialised it as 'Round-up Ready Flex (RRF)' in USA.
- It also intended to commercialise it worldwide including India and applied for permission through its business partner Mahyco to Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) for commercial release of the new variety”.

It is learnt that Mahyco had conducted field trials of several Bt cotton hybrids/varieties containing RRF trait.

#### The ill-effects of such herbicide-tolerant GM crops.

- The herbicide-resistant gene could **spread through pollen** into the biodiversity system leading to transformation of weeds into super weeds on a large-scale.
- It would not only threaten the growth and yields of all crops in future, but also could increase cultivation costs and lead to health hazards.

#### Beyond News

- Highly-placed sources in the State Government told that, in the absence of any steps for regulation of the unauthorised variety of cotton seed, Governments of Telangana, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Punjab, Haryana and others, where the fibre crop is cultivated on a large-scale, are in confusion and unable to act against it.

- Field trials were conducted but subsequently the application was withdrawn following growing agitations in the country against genetically modified (GM) crops.

Now, the unofficial estimates put the extent of the unauthorised cotton to be about 20% in the country.

## [Plea on steps to curb air pollution: SC seeks Centre's reply](#)

**News:** The Supreme Court sought the Centre's response on a petition seeking a series of steps to curb air pollution, including ban on sale, possession and bursting of firecrackers across the country.

### **Beyond News**

- A bench issued notices to some states, including Delhi, seeking their replies. The plea has raised the issue of coming up with a solution for crop burning, which is a major source of air pollution in the Delhi-national capital region (NCR).
- Besides seeking a ban on firecrackers across the country, the petition, filed has sought directions for environment-friendly, cleaner fuels and implementation of regulations on dust from construction activities.
- The court, in its last year's direction, had suspended all licenses which permits sale of fireworks, wholesale and retail within the territory of NCR till further orders.



## **GDP shrugs off GST as Q2 growth rebounds to 6.3%**

### **News**

- GDP growth recovered in the second fiscal quarter from a three-year low of 5.7% in the preceding three-month period, while Gross Value Added (GVA) growth accelerated to 6.1% from 5.6% in the first quarter, according to official data released by the government .

## Important Findings

- India's economy regained momentum in the September quarter as the manufacturing sector shrugged off any teething impact from the July 1 implementation of the Goods and Services Tax to propel gross domestic product (GDP) growth to 6.3%.
- GDP growth for the first half of the financial year (April-September) was 6% compared with 7.7% in the year-earlier period. GVA growth was at 5.8% compared with 7.2% over the same period.
- The manufacturing sector expanded by 7% in the quarter, a robust acceleration from 1.2% in the first quarter. Still, the pace was slower than the 7.7% seen in the second quarter of 2016-2017.
- Other sectors that witnessed growth of more than 6% were electricity, gas, water supply and other utility services, and trade, hotels, transport and communication services related to broadcasting.
- The agriculture sector grew by 2.3% in the first quarter, and by 4.1% in the year-earlier period.

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**General Studies-01**

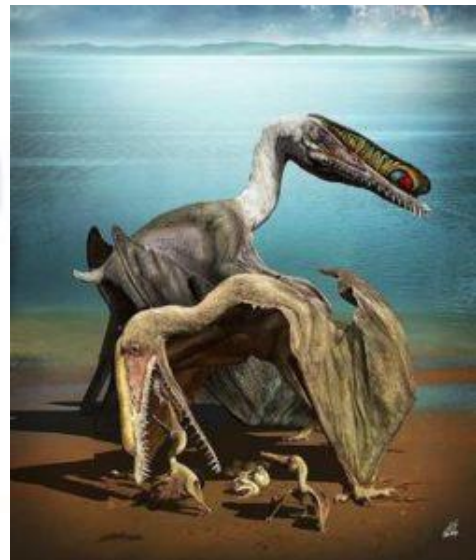
## Egg fossils crack open secrets of ancient flying reptiles

### News

- Palaeontologists have uncovered more than 200 fossilised eggs belonging to the flying reptiles that soared during the age of dinosaurs.

### Why it's important?

- The discovery, published in the journal Science, is the largest collection of pterosaur eggs found so far.
- The find could help advance our understanding about the early lives of the extinct winged creatures, including their relationships with their parents.



## Pterosaurs

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- Pterosaurs were the first creatures — after insects — to evolve powered flight, meaning they flapped their wings to stay aloft instead of simply jumping and gliding.
- Pterosaurs terrorised the skies for more than 160 million years until they went extinct alongside dinosaurs some 66 million years ago. They are the largest animals to have ever flown, with some like the colossal Quetzalcoatlushaving wingspans as large as fighter jets.
- The species that laid the recently discovered eggs is known as Hamipterus tianshanensis. It lived during the early Cretaceous period and its wings stretched about 11 feet. It also sported a thick forehead crest and had a mouth full of pointy teeth for snatching fish.
- Pterosaurs laid soft eggs like snakes or lizards, not brittle ones like birds. The fossilised eggs found at the nesting ground look more like deflated balloons than eggs cracked for an omelette.

## Beyond News

- Using CT scanning, the team peered into the shells. Of the 215 eggs they found, 16 had embryonic remains, including one with partial wings and a toothless lower jaw.
- The team also discovered evidence that hatchlings had leg bones that were more developed than their forelimbs, suggesting the babies most likely crawled and were unable to fly. The team added that young pterosaurs were probably very reliant on their parents.

## General Studies-02

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### Navy alive to China threat, says Lanba

**News:** Referring to the Chinese deployment of submarines for anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden, the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Sunil Lanba said, it was an “odd task” for a submarine to perform.



## Beyond News

- China has actively deployed ships and submarines in the Indian Ocean in the **name of anti-piracy measures** and the frequency has steadily gone up.
- Several U.S. military officers too have expressed similar views in the past.
- In a related development, India and Singapore are in the process of discussing the modalities of the overarching naval cooperation agreement signed in presence of the two Defence Ministers earlier this week.

This gives India access to the **Changi naval base near the Strait of Malacca** as a basing area.

- After much deliberation, the Indian Navy has decided to go ahead with a conventionally powered reactor instead of a nuclear-powered one for its second Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC-II).

## FM seeks to allay depositors' fears, hints at review of Bill

### The 'bail-in' clause

- The Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Bill, 2017, covers bankruptcy of businesses such as banks

- The Bill introduces the provision for a 'bail-in', whose purpose is to provide capital to absorb the losses of a bank to ensure its survival

- Here, survival does not mean safety of depositors' money, but restoration of capital of the bank

- The 'bail-in' empowers the proposed Resolution Corporation to suspend a liability owed by the bank (money in a savings or FD account)

- With a 'bail-in', the bank can simply refuse repayment of a customer's money and instead, issues securities such as preference shares



## News

- Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Arun Jaitley said that, bank depositors' **fears about the safety of their savings** once the Centre enacts the proposed new law for resolving financial entities' bankruptcy may be



premature as the legislation is still at the drafting stage and could see several 'corrections' before its passage.

### Beyond News

- Expected to be tabled in Parliament's winter session that starts on December 15, the **Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance (FRDI) Bill of 2017** proposes scrapping the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation (DICGC) that guarantees repayment of all bank deposits up to Rs. 1,00,000 in case a stressed bank is liquidated.
- There is ambiguity on how depositor's savings will be protected in stressed banks and other financial entities under the new law, which also includes a '**bail-in**' option to resolve financial entities' stress.
- A bail-in option entails a bank issuing securities in lieu of the money deposited in its coffers.

The Corporation will be given a year's time to resolve problems facing firms in trouble.

### India silent on Maldives, China FTA

#### News

- India maintained cautious silence on **the free trade agreement that the Maldives signed with China.**

### Beyond News

- Senior officials at the Ministry of External Affairs said the government needs to look into the details of the FTA between the Indian Ocean country and Beijing even as the Opposition of Maldives said the deal was 'detrimental' to the Maldivian economy.
- The FTA, second in the region, after a similar agreement between China and Pakistan, reportedly caused surprise in the official circles here as the President Abdullah Yameen government pushed the agreement with no opposition in a brief session of the Maldivian parliament.

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## General Studies-03

### Underground power station plans in Western Ghats raise concern

#### News

- An underground pipeline connecting two major reservoirs, and power stations situated underneath a pristine reserve forest are part of an ambitious ₹5,000-crore project that environmentalists say will leave an indelible mark on the flora and fauna of the Western Ghats.

#### Problems

- This installation will take place through a **“cut and cover” method**, which will entail cutting out the trees, excavating soil and then filling it back once the power station is completed in an estimated five years time.
- Wildlife activist from the region said that, this stretch is dense evergreen forest. Even if it is underground, construction will see cutting of thousands of trees, setting up of township and new roads. It is an ecological disaster that will destroy a vital habitat of the **endangered lion-tailed macaque**.



The proposed area of construction comes within **the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ)** limits as shown by the December 2015 draft around Sharavati Wildlife Sanctuary, particularly in the N. Talakalale village. Once ESZ norms are applied, the area would see a near prohibition on new hydro-electric projects.

#### Beyond News

- The Sharavati Pumped Storage project, envisioned to generate 2,000 MW of electricity, is situated just 3.5 km from the Sharavati Wildlife Sanctuary and is expected to consume nearly 150 hectares or 371 acres of Jog Reserve Forest.
- The forests come between the sanctuary, Aghanashini Lion-tailed Macaque Conservation Reserve, and is part of the key, contiguous forest corridor of the Western Ghats.

The report notes that the pipelines, power house and transformers will be placed underground — even up to a depth of 312 m.

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**General Studies-02**

## **First phase of Chabahar port opened**

### **News**

- Indian, Afghan and Iranian officials held a trilateral meeting to discuss implementing the trade and transit agreement announced in May 2016.

### **Beyond News**

- Chabahar port is seen as a feeder port to the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) to Russia as well as land route to Central Asia.
- It is also seen as a rival to the Chinese-built Gwadar port off Pakistan, about 80 km away, which is a critical link in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.
- It also provide alternative access to landlocked Afghanistan to regional and global markets.
- India has committed \$500 million to building two berths at Chabahar to process trade and develop an economic zone around them, as well as \$1.6 billion for a 650-km rail link from Chabahar to Zahedan and into Afghanistan.

## **'Law needed for those wrongfully imprisoned'**

### **News**

- The Delhi High Court has asked the Law Commission of India to see if **a new legislation can be brought in to provide relief and rehabilitation** to victims of wrongful prosecution and incarceration.

### **Beyond News**

- There is no statutory or legal scheme at present to compensate those who spend years in jail only to be acquitted later.

- **The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** says of 4,19,623 inmates lodged in various jails across the country in 2015, 67% are undertrials.

Prison records show that 3,599 undertrials were detained in jails for five years or more in the country.

- The Supreme Court in various judgments over the years has held that compensation can be awarded by constitutional courts for violation of **fundamental rights under Article 21 of the Constitution.**

## General Studies-03

### What's behind the bitcoin boom?



### News

- As the price of the bitcoin leapt past \$10,000 this week, marking a tenfold gain in 2017, many investors seemed to nurse a 'missed-out' feeling.

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## Some bit coin facts

- In the financial markets, asset bubbles are spotted by comparing the traded price of an asset to its fair value.
- For stocks, the valuation metric may be the price-to-earnings or book value multiple. For oil or gold, there's the cost of producing each barrel or ounce. The rupee is assessed on real effective exchange rate.
- But it's hard to say if there's a bubble brewing in bitcoins because it has no such valuation measure. Its price is therefore decided mainly by **demand-supply dynamics**.

## Beyond News:

- The rupee-equivalent price of a bitcoin has zoomed from under Rs. 600 in November 2012 to more than Rs. 6.8 lakh by November 2017, a cool 300% annualised return.
- In the same period, the BSE Sensex has produced a staid 11.5% despite a bull market.

## Indian scenario:

- In India, the RBI is still undecided on the issue of how and if at all it will regulate virtual currencies.
- Meanwhile, it has issued disclaimers that it hasn't authorised bitcoins as a medium of exchange, warning investors of potential 'financial, operational, legal, customer protection and security-related risks' if they dabble in them.

## [This software can identify people from their DNA in minutes](#)

### News

- Researchers have developed a software system to accurately identify people and cell lines from their DNA in a matter of minutes.



## Beyond News

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- The technology has a wide range of applications, but its most immediate use could be **to flag mislabelled or contaminated cell lines in cancer experiments**, according to the study published in the journal eLife.
- The software is designed to run on the MinION, an instrument the size of a credit card that pulls in strands of DNA through its microscopic pores and reads out sequences of nucleotides, or the DNA letters A, T, C, G.
- The device has made it possible for researchers to study bacteria and viruses in the field, but its high error-rate and large sequencing gaps have, until now, limited its use on human cells with their billions of nucleotides.

## New tool to stop hacking

### News

- Scientists have developed a new anti-hacker tool, **called High-fidelity Adaptive Deception & Emulation System (HADES)**, which rather than blocking an intruder, deploys an alternative reality feeding hacker with false data.

### Beyond News

- HADES has been developed by researchers at Sandia National Laboratories in the U.S.
- Rather than being summarily removed from a data source, a discovered hacker is led unobtrusively into HADES, where cloned virtual hard drives, memory and data sets create a simulation very much like the reality.

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**General Studies-02**

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## 21st century India cannot shun leprosy patients: SC

### News

The Supreme Court declared in an order that, twenty-first century society cannot justify shunning persons affected by leprosy or keeping them hidden in homes and away from the mainstream

## Beyond News

The court asked the Centre to respond in eight weeks to a call to repeal 119 Central and State laws in practice since the 1950s that discriminate against leprosy patients despite the fact that modern medicine completely cures the disease. A bench, acting on a PIL filed by Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, found that these statutory laws continue to recognise superstitions that leprosy is “infectious and has something to do with genetics”.

❖ **There are 119 laws that discriminate against persons affected by leprosy in broadly the following five ways:**

- (i) cause stigmatization and indignity to persons affected by leprosy
- (ii) isolate/segregate persons affected by leprosy
- (iii) deny them access to public services
- (iv) impose disqualifications on them under personal laws
- (v) bar them from occupying or standing for public posts or office.

## UAE to open new consular offices in India

### News

Boosting bilateral engagement with India, the United Arab Emirates will open several new consular centres in India and invest \$75 billion of its sovereign wealth fund in the country.

### Beyond News

Apart from renewed focus on diplomatic and consular contacts, the envoy said that his country stands with India on counter-terror cooperation firmed up with Mr. Modi's visit to the UAE in August 2015.

UAE has put in place a mechanism to oversee investment of \$75 billion of its sovereign wealth fund into the Indian economy over the next decade.

The UAE sovereign wealth fund, known as Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA), has been a major issue that both sides have been trying to harness.

- The affirmation of continued investment followed a day after ADIA bought stakes in KKR India Financial Services Pvt Ltd, a major



non-banking financial company in India.

- UAE and India have held two rounds of strategic dialogue. Significantly, terrorism is also a criterion on which the country has been trying to corner neighbour Qatar, which is facing isolation within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) which began its summit meeting in Kuwait .
- GCC, host of more than seven million Indian workers and professionals, is a key source of foreign remittances to India, and stability of the region is in India's interest.

## **Kerala to do own caste, socio-economic census**

### **News**

- ❖ Central government holding back the all-important data on castes from its Socio-Economic and Caste Census, Kerala find out how each of the castes is faring in the State.

### **Why its important?**

- ❖ The socio-economic indicators of castes are required to understand the social standing of each caste in society.  
The caste data are also a key factor in fixing the reservation quota for Other Backward Communities and other eligible groups in government services.

### **Beyond News:**

- ✚ The Kerala State Commission for Backward Classes (KSCBC) has begun steps to hold an exclusive socio-economic and caste census in the State.
- ✚ The Kerala Institute for Research, Training, and Development Studies of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes had declined to entertain the commission's demand for conducting the survey, which warranted a separate study.
- ✚ The document becomes all the more important when there is a demand for revising the list of Other Backward Classes (OBC) in the State.  
Going by the provisions of the Kerala State Commission for Backward Classes Act, 1993, those OBCs which are not adequately represented in the government services shall be given reservation in appointments or posts.



- ✚ The caste data are also required for ascertaining the reservation quota of various beneficiary castes in the Central government services.

## Finalizing policy against drug abuse, govt. tells SC

### News

- ➔ The Centre informed the Supreme Court that it is finalising a National Policy on Drug Demand Reduction to combat the rising menace of drug and alcohol abuse, especially among children.

### Beyond News

- ❖ The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment informed a Bench that 18 States have responded to an advisory sent by the Centre to formulate an action plan for combating drug abuse.
- ❖ The Ministry, in an affidavit, said it had assigned the National Drug Dependence Treatment Centre under the All India Institute of Medical Sciences to conduct a national survey on the extent and pattern of substance use.
- ❖ A final report is expected by March 2018.
- ❖ The affidavit was on a petition filed by Telugu Yuva Shakti member, for a CBI investigation in connection with the recent drug scandal involving Telegu celebrities.

## Bill passed, but no end to trouble over KPME Act

### News

Less than two weeks after the State legislature adopted the Karnataka Private Medical Establishments (Amendments) Bill, trouble is brewing over it again.

### Beyond News

The Justice Vikramjit Sen Committee, set up to recommend and draft amendments to the KPME Act, 2007, had suggested that **government hospitals be brought under the ambit of the Act** to make them accountable. However, the committee's report was set aside and the Health Department drafted the amendments.



The inclusion of public hospitals under the Bill is not possible as the principal Act of 2007 is titled Karnataka Private Medical Establishments Act. Including government hospitals will mean changing the very name of the Act

## General Studies-03

### Cyclone relief measures intensified in Ernakulam

#### News

- ➔ Tracking the 115 fishing boats that reportedly left the harbours in the district and went missing during Cyclone Ockhi has been listed as the prime agenda of the rescue mission.

#### Beyond News

- ❖ A host of agencies will come together to search for the missing vessels.
- ❖ The decision was taken at a meeting chaired by the District Collector here to take stock of the **relief and rehabilitation measures in the aftermath of the cyclone.**
- ❖ Arrangements, including transportation, will be made to send back fishermen rescued by the Navy and undergoing treatment in the hospital as soon as they are discharged.
- ❖ **Plan fund allocated to the District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA)** will be utilised for the treatment of the injured and their transportation.
- ❖ The **Suchitwa Mission has been asked to complete sanitation measures** in three days in areas where septic tanks were damaged in the natural calamity.
- ❖ **All possible measures will be taken to prevent the outbreak of epidemics.**
- Officials of the health and social welfare departments have been deployed to undertake chlorination in the affected areas.



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## **General Studies-02**

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### **'Panchayat certificate no longer proof of citizenship'**

#### **News:**

- The Supreme Court held that a certificate issued by the Gram Panchayat secretary or the executive magistrate by itself was **“no proof of citizenship”** unless it established the legacy linkages with a person who was an Indian citizen.

#### **Beyond News:**

- The top court said the certificates issued by the Gram Panchayat secretary merely acknowledged shifting of residence of a married woman from one village to another.
- The Bench said that, such proof will come only if the link between the claimant and the legacy person [who has to be a citizen] is established.
- The Court set aside the Gauhati High Court order, which made such certificates invalid, and allowed the appeals against the order to a limited extent.

### **China, India vow to protect globalization**

#### **News:**

- Top economic planners of India and China set the goal of leading a new wave of globalisation by synchronizing their emerging economies.

#### **Beyond News:**

- They agreed that the two countries must work together to rescue globalisation from neo-protectionist tendencies in the U.S., Europe or anywhere else in the world.
- An open, liberal and rule-based globalisation, wherein India and China could play a defining role, was necessary for prosperity and global political stability.

- It underscored the urgency of India-China partnership because of rising protectionism.
- Chinese investment in manufacturing could generate large-scale employment in India.

Besides, India could benefit from Chinese experience gained from innovation-based “fourth industrial revolution” that focussed on advanced robotics, artificial intelligence, electric vehicles and internet-of-things. India could learn from China’s rich experience in developing infrastructure.

## **UAE set to open more consular offices in India**

### **News:**

The United Arab Emirates will open several consular centres in India.

### **Beyond News:**

- Ambassador of the Gulf nation reaffirmed his government’s intention to revitalise the the country’s infrastructure with \$75 billion investment from its sovereign wealth fund.
- Apart from renewed focus on diplomatic and consular contacts, the envoy said that his country stands with India on counter-terror cooperation firmed up with the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to UAE in August 2015.
- The envoy also informed that UAE has put in place a mechanism to oversee an investment of \$75 billion from its sovereign wealth fund into the Indian economy over the next decade.\$1 billion has already been invested in India.
- The fund will be utilised for infrastructure projects in India. The UAE sovereign wealth fund known as Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) has been a major subject that both sides have been trying to harness.

## **General Studies-03**

### **Rs. 8,450 crore package to boost exports**

**News :**The government announced incentives worth Rs. 8,450 crore to boost exports of goods and services mainly from labour-intensive segments and the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and to increase employment generation and value-addition.

## Beyond News

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- The incentives were announced as part of the mid-term review of **the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP)**.
- The move comes at a time when India's shipments shrank in October the first after 14 consecutive months of positive growth due to the impact of the Goods and Services Tax (GST).
- The FTP for the period 2015-2020 had set an ambitious target of \$900 billion for India's exports of goods and services by 2019-20.

It also aimed to raise India's share in world exports from 2% to 3.5%.

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## General Studies-02

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### India clarifies on UAV crash as China protests 'violation of airspace'

#### News

- An unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) of the Indian Army that crashed into the Chinese side of the border was on a regular training mission and lost contact with ground control due to technical problem.

#### Beyond News

- In a statement, it also claimed that ,as per standard protocol, the Indian border security personnel immediately alerted their Chinese counterparts to locate the UAV.
- The Indian clarification came in the wake of China's defence ministry accusing India of violating its airspace.
- Indian side said hat, an Indian UAV which was on a regular training mission **inside the Indian territory lost contact with the ground control** due to some technical problem and crossed over the LAC [Line of Actual Control] in the Sikkim Sector.

## A woman does not mortgage herself to a man with marriage: CJI



### News

- Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra orally observed that, a woman does not mortgage herself to a man by marrying him and she retains her identity, including her religious identity, even after she exercises her right to marry outside her community **under the Special Marriage Act.**

### Beyond News

- The Special Marriage Act of 1954 is seen as a statutory alternative for couples who choose to retain their identity in an inter-religious marriage.
- The Chief Justice of India observed nobody can presume that a woman has changed her faith or religion just because she chose to change her name after marrying outside her community.

## India's position on Palestine is independent, says MEA

### News

- Hours after U.S. President **Donald Trump recognised Jerusalem** as the capital of Israel, India took a cautious stance, saying it follows an independent policy on Palestine that is not influenced by any "third country."

### Beyond News

- Trump's announcement was welcomed by the Israelis but drew swift condemnation across the Arab-Islamic world even as Indian experts cautioned that the U.S. recognition will place new challenges before the Arab world.
- **The United Nations Security Council has convened a meeting** on Friday in the wake of the US President Donald Trump announcing his decision to recognise Jerusalem as Israel's capital.
- At least eight of the 15 members of the Security Council, including Britain and France — the two permanent members which closely align themselves

on most of the global issues joined by other non-permanent members Bolivia, Egypt, Italy, Senegal, Sweden, Britain and Uruguay asked for a special meeting of the top decision-making wing of the New York-headquartered world body.

India has traditionally supported an independent Palestine as part of a two-state solution. The statement, however, did not specifically address the issue of Jerusalem as the U.S.-recognised capital of Israel.

## General Studies-03

### What is DNA fingerprinting and how is it done?

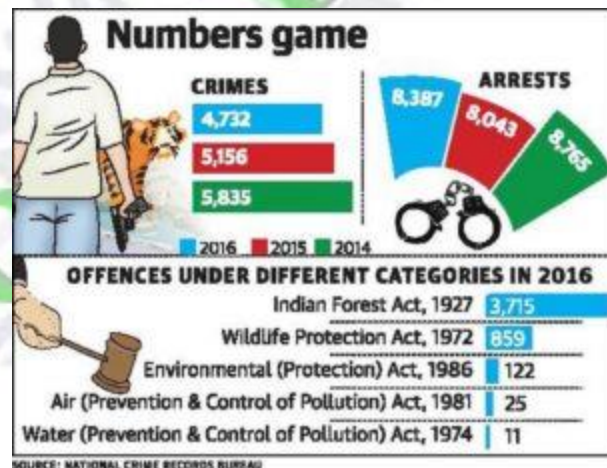
[CLICK HERE to read this in detail](#)

### '8% drop in environmental crimes'

**News:** The data released by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) recently have shown a decline of over 8% in environmental crimes across the country.

#### Beyond News

- A total of 4,732 environmental crimes were recorded in 2016, marking a decline from 5,156 offences in the same category in 2015.
- Environmental crimes include offences related to Indian Forest Act, 1927, Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986, Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, and Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.



### Dead pelican triggers a scare

**News:** The death of a few spot-billed pelicans at Kukkarahalli Lake in Mysuru over the last one week has raised concern over the apparent rise in pollution in the lake, besides adding to fears of avian flu.

## Beyond News

- In the past week, at least eight pelicans have reportedly died, but the deaths have gone unreported.
- Though officials from the Department of Animal Husbandry claimed that they had not come across any bird deaths and stated that only a couple of sick birds were treated, bird enthusiasts said pelicans had indeed died over the last few days.

**DECEMBER 8 2017**

## General Studies-01

### UNESCO names Kumbh Mela Intangible Cultural Heritage

**News:** After 'yoga' and 'Nouroz', Kumbh Mela/ KumbhMela, the largest congregation of pilgrims on the planet, has been listed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage under UNESCO (**United Nations** Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation).



## Beyond News

- The Kumbh Mela is held in Haridwar, Allahabad, Ujjain and Nashik.
- The inscription of 'Kumbh Mela' in the list was undertaken following recommendation by an expert body which examines nominations submitted by member countries of the UNESCO.
- The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage under UNESCO has inscribed 'Kumbh Mela' on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity during its 12th session held at Jeju, South Korea from 4-9 December 2017.
- This inscription is the third in two years following the inscriptions of 'Yoga' and 'Norouz' on 1st December 2016.



# General Studies-02

## Wassenaar Arrangement decides to make India its member

**News:** In a significant development, elite export control regime **Wassenaar Arrangement**(WA) decided to admit India as its new member, which is expected to raise New Delhi's stature in the field of non-proliferation besides helping it acquire critical technologies.

### What is WA?

- The **Wassenaar Arrangement** on Export Controls for Conventional Arms and Dual-Use Goods and Technologies, commonly known as the **Wassenaar Arrangement**, is a multilateral export control regime (MECR) with 42 participating states including many former Comecon (Warsaw Pact) countries.

### Beyond News:

- The decision was taken at the two-day plenary meeting of the grouping in Vienna.
- India will become the Arrangement's 42nd participating state as soon as the necessary procedural arrangements for joining the WA are completed.

### Significance:

- India's entry into the export control regime would enhance its credentials in the field of non-proliferation despite not being a signatory to the Non-Proliferation **Treaty** (NPT).
- The WA membership is also expected to build up a strong case for India's entry into the 48-member Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).
- The Wassenaar Arrangement plays a significant role in promoting transparency and greater responsibility in transfers of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies.

## India to achieve 'electricity for all' by early 2020s: IEA

**News:** Half a billion people have gained access to electricity in India since 2000, almost doubling the country's electrification rate, according to the **World Energy Access report** released by the International Energy Agency (IEA).



### **Important Findings in Report:**

- This “remarkable” growth puts India on course to achieving access to electricity for all in the early 2020s
- The number of people without access to electricity fell to 1.1 billion in 2016 from 1.7 billion in 2000.
- It is on track to decline to 674 million by 2030, with India reaching universal access well before then. Since 2012, more than 100 million people per year have gained electricity access, an acceleration from the rate of 62 million people per year seen between 2000 and 2012.
- Half a billion people have gained access to electricity in India since 2000, almost doubling the country's electrification rate.

### **Beyond News**

The report also added that India is expected to reach universal electricity access in the early-2020s. Progress has also been made on clean cooking, although 830 million people in India still lack access.

## Ministers not under RTI: HC

**News:** The Delhi High Court has set aside the Central Information Commission order declaring Ministers as “public authorities” and answerable under the Right to Information law.

### **Beyond News**

- The judge said that, there was no occasion for the CIC to enter upon the question as to whether a minister is a 'public **authority**' under **Section 2(h) of the Act**. Further, directions issued by the CIC are also wholly outside the scope of the matter before the CIC.

- The High Court's order came on the Centre's appeal against the CIC order.

The case emanates from an application filed by a Maharashtra resident who wanted to know how to get an appointment with the Union Law Minister.

## General Studies-03

### A.P. registers 11.37% growth rate in first half of current fiscal

**News :** Andhra Pradesh has registered a growth rate of 11.37% during the first half of the current fiscal compared to the national growth rate of 5.8%.

#### **Why this News Important?**

- The State has registered highest growth rate in the agriculture and allied sectors with 25.60% as against the national growth rate of 2%.

#### **Beyond News**

- Industry and services sectors also registered highest growth rate of 7.43% and 8.38% respectively. These growth rates are higher than the national growth rates of 3.6% and 7.9% respectively.
- All the three sectors have shown a fall in growth during Q2 compared to Q1.
- The agriculture and allied sectors' growth rate slipped to 24.05% in Q2 from 27.6% in Q1. Similarly, the industry sector has shown a growth rate of 6.80% in Q2 as against 8.05% in Q1.
- The services sector registered a growth rate of only 8.38% in Q2 as against 8.67% in Q1.
- A growth rate of 9.98% had been registered in the industry sector during the first half of 2016-17, while it is 7.43% during the first half of the current fiscal. The services sector too registered a fall from 9.57% in 2016-17 to 8.38% in 2017-18.
- The growth in these sectors is high compared to the national growth. Also, there is a fall in the national growth in the agriculture and allied sectors and services sector.

## NGT raps Punjab, Haryana over their action plan on pollution

**News:** The National Green Tribunal slammed Punjab and Haryana governments for filing generalised action plans to combat air pollution and directed them to refer to its previous judgements on the issue.

### **Beyond News**

- A bench headed by NGT Chairperson, also summoned the environment secretaries of Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, UP and Rajasthan asking them to give a “workable solution” for combating the problem of pollution.

The tribunal took exception that Punjab and Haryana were following the Supreme Court-appointed Environment Pollution Control Authority’s (EPCA’s) comprehensive action plan and not applying their own mind.

**DECEMBER 9 2017**

## **General Studies-01**

### Burial urn, pots unearthed in Pallavaram

**News:** A six-foot-high burial urn, *mudhumakkal thazhi*, made of clay, and pieces of pots were unearthed at Old Pallavaram .

### **Beyond News**

- The artefacts are estimated to be around 2,000 years old.
- The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) had earmarked several acres of land in Old Pallavaram for undertaking such excavations, which was objected to by the residents. The archaeological remains were found near Ambedkar Thidal.
- A few clay pieces were initially found by the researchers. On



Friday, they unearthed a six-foot-high pot. The pot had 12 leg points made of sand mixed with clay.

An official said that, the history of *mudhumakkal thazhi* goes back to over 3,000 years, and these pots could be at least 2,000 years old, going by their black and brown colour..It was an ancient Tamil practice to make huge earthen pots to bury people.

## General Studies-02

### UN rejects US recognition of Jerusalem as Israeli capital

**News:** The United States found itself isolated at a special United Nations Security Council meeting in its **recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel**, a move that set off alarms about the risk of escalating conflict in the Middle East.

#### **Beyond News:**

- **Eight of the 15 members of the UN Security Council**, the organization the looks out for peace and security around the world, had called for an urgent meeting to analyze the decision taken by Washington.
- Five European nations said that, **the status of Jerusalem must be determined through negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians** leading to a final status agreement.
- The European Union “has a clear and united position: they believe that the only realistic solution to the conflict between Israel and **Palestine** is based on two States, and with Jerusalem as the capital of both the State of Israel and the State of Palestine.
- UN special envoy to the Middle East said that, for both Israelis and Palestinians, Jerusalem “is and always will be the centre of their life, their culture,” as well as the “symbol and cornerstone” of the faith of many millions of people around the world.

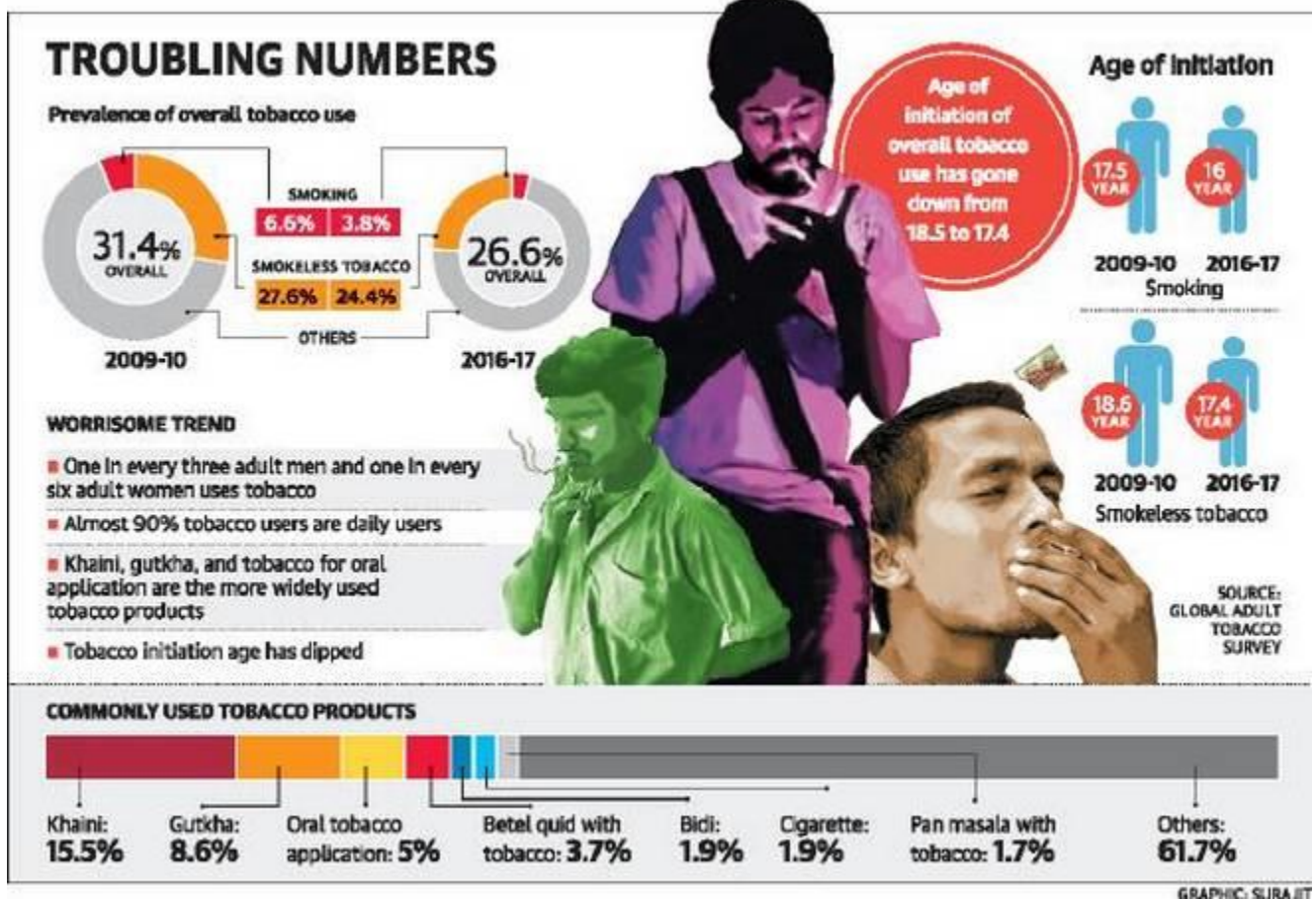
### RTE reservation likely to be extended to aided schools

**News:** With the aim of improving the efficacy of the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, the State government is planning to ensure that aided schools too start reserving seats for students from weaker sections in the neighbourhood.

## Beyond News

- Primary and Secondary Education Minister said that, they are in the process of making changes to ensure that scope of the RTE Act is extended to aided institutions and will ensure that the right beneficiaries are selected.
- As per **Section 12 (1) (b) of the RTE Act**, aided schools shall provide free and compulsory elementary education to such proportion of children admitted based on the annual recurring aid or grants so received bears their annual recurring expenses, subject to a minimum of 25%.

## More minors smoking, chewing tobacco in State



## News:

- The number of people smoking and chewing tobacco in the State has decreased by nearly five percentage points since 2009, according to the Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) 2.

## Findings of Survey

- The report, released at Tata Memorial Hospital (TMH) in Parel, showed that the prevalence of tobacco has come down from 31.4% in GATS1 (2009-10) to 26.6 % in GATS2.
- Tobacco use in the 15-17 age group has nearly doubled from 2.9% to 5.5%, and the age of initiation has fallen further from 18.5 years to 17.4 years.
- The report also revealed that exposure of adults to second-hand smoke at home has dipped from 36.6% in 2009-10 to 19.9% in 2016-17.
- The figure is also lower at the workplace, coming down from 23.8% to 20.1%.

## Solutions

1. The police, who have to ensure that tobacco is not sold near schools and colleges, are not proactive as they look at this task as moral policing.
2. Spread awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco.
3. The State has also undertaken an oral cancer screening drive, through which they will reach out to at least one crore people this month.

## Adultery law weighted in favour of men: Supreme Court

**News:** The **Supreme Court** said that, the dusty Victorian provision of adultery in the Indian Penal Code treats a married woman as her husband's "subordinate."

## Beyond News

- The court admitted a petition to drop adultery as a criminal offence from the statute book.
- The Supreme Court recorded in its five-page written order that, time has come when the society must realise that a **woman is equal to a man in every respect.**
- Issuing notice, the court would examine two aspects of the penal provision. One, why does **Section 497** treat the man as the adulterer and the married woman as a victim.
- The Supreme Court declared that, the provision (Section 497) really creates a dent in the individual independent identity of a woman when the emphasis is laid on the connivance or consent of the husband. This tantamount to subordination of a woman where the Constitution confers (women) equal status.

Further, only a husband or the person in whose care the husband has left his wife can file a complaint under Section 497. The petition challenges the validity of Section 198 (1) and (2) of the Code of Criminal Procedure which deems that only a husband can be an aggrieved party in offences against marriage like adultery and only he can go to court.

## General Studies-03

### Kacheguda becomes India's first energy-efficient railway station

#### News

- Kacheguda **Railway Station** under the South Central Railway (SCR) has earned the unique distinction of being **the first Energy Efficient 'A1 Category' Railway Station on Indian Railways.**



#### Kacheguda Railway station

- Kacheguda Railway station is a historic building and had completed 100 years. Situated in the heart of Hyderabad, it was built in 1916 by the Nizam's Guaranteed State Railway during the reign of Mir Osman Ali Khan, the seventh Nizam.

#### Beyond News

- The station has achieved 100% energy efficiency by replacing 1,312 conventional lights with light-emitting diode (LED) lighting, among other steps.
- About 370 ceiling fans, too, were replaced with energy efficient Brushless DC Electrical (BLDC) motors fans, and 12 air conditioners with energy efficient inverter-type air conditioners.
- All these measures would save about 1.76 lakh units and ₹14.08 lakh per annum with reduction of the connected load by 46.18 kW for Railways, said General Manager Vinod Kumar Yadav.



## India gets admission into Wassenaar Arrangement

**News** India's gets entry to the Wassenaar Arrangement as the 42nd member of the organisation .

→ **AIM:** To regulate trade and use of dual use technology.

### **Beyond News**

- India will **get access to high technology**, which will help address the demands of Indian space and defence sectors.
- It will also boost New Delhi's **chances of joining the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG)**.
- India's membership is expected to **facilitate high technology tie-ups** with Indian industry and ease access to high-tech items for our defence and space programmes."

### **A shot in the arm**

Founded in 1996, the Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) is an elite club of countries subscribing to arms export controls, similar to the NSG and the Missile Technology Control Regime

▪ Headquartered in Vienna, it has 42 members, the latest entrant being India. Barring China, all permanent members of the U.N. Security Council are its signatories

▪ Its goal is to "promote transparency and greater

responsibility in transfer of conventional arms and dual-use goods and technologies"

▪ Since it's not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, India will look to the WA membership to boost its credentials to enter NSG

**DECEMBER 11 2017**

## **General Studies-02**

### WTO: diverse views fuel bleak prospect for outcomes

**News:** The World Trade Organisation's (WTO) Buenos Aires meeting commenced amid concerns on support for anti-globalization, protectionism and bilateralism.

### **Beyond News:**

- A vast majority of the 164 WTO member nations — led by India, China and South Africa — are, therefore, learnt to be demanding that the final declaration of the WTO's highest decision-making body reaffirms commitment to multilateralism and rules-based trading system as well as negotiations with development agenda at the centre.

However, due to the divergent views of the WTO members on several issues, including the outstanding ones in the ongoing Doha Round negotiations, there is little expectation that the outcome of the December 10-13 Ministerial Conference would be substantial.

- The Doha Round had begun in Doha in 2001 with the ‘development agenda’ — to improve trading prospects of developing nations — at the heart of the talks.
- Countries, mostly from the developed world, want what they call the ‘21st century trade issues’ — such as e-commerce, investment facilitation, matters relating to small firms and gender equality — to be discussed for rule-making to enhance the relevance of the WTO.

India, and several countries mainly from the developing world, are against introduction of such ‘new issues’ into the Doha Round, saying it is important to first resolve outstanding issues such as the ones relating to food security and protection of poor farmers before taking up new topics.

## New tanks in fourth phase of Mission Kakatiya

### News:

The State Government has decided to take up formation of new minor irrigation tanks across the local rainwater flows – streams – and extend the benefits of small water bodies to people as part of the fourth-phase of Mission Kakatiya programme scheduled to be launched next month.

### Mission Kakatiya programme

- Mission Kakatiya tagline or Mana Ooru Mana Cheruvu is a program of restoring all the tanks and lakes in Telangana State, India. The Program was inaugurated on 12 March 2015 by chief minister Kalvakuntla Chandrashekar Rao. The name 'Mission Kakatiya' is given in the remembrance and tribute to the Kakatiya rulers who developed a large number of the irrigation tanks.



## Beyond News:

Formation of new tanks would be in addition to taking up restoration of the identified existing minor irrigation tanks as part of the programme. Only repairs and de-silting of small water bodies including restoration of feeder channels, strengthening of bunds, repairs to surplus weirs and sluices were taken up in the first three phases of the programme which also aimed at revival of the chain-link-tank system.

## 24 years on, OBC workforce in Centre still short of Mandal mark

### News:

- President Ram Nath Kovind has appointed a five-member commission to examine sub-categorisation of Other Backward Classes (OBCs) “to achieve greater social justice,” a reality check shows that representation of OBCs in the workforce in Central Government offices falls far short of achieving the 27% quota recommended by the Mandal Commission.

### Lagging in numbers

Percentage of OBC employees under various groups in the 24 Ministries and in the 57 ministries/departments/constitutional bodies cumulatively as on January 1, 2017

Type	Percentage of OBC employees in 24 Ministries	Percentage of OBC employees in 57 Ministries/departments/constitutional bodies
Group A	17%	14%
Group B	14%	15%
Group C	11%	17%
Group D	10%	18%

### Beyond News:

- Data furnished under the Right to Information (RTI) Act by 24 of the 35 Union Ministries, 25 of the 37 Central departments and various constitutional bodies reveal that 24 years since the implementation of the Mandal Commission recommendations, across various groups of employees, the OBCs have not optimally benefited from it.
- Only 17% of the Group A officers in the 24 Ministries belong to the OBCs. The representation among the Group B officers is even lower at 14%.
- Likewise, only 11% of the Group C employees are from the OBCs and in Group D, the figure is 10%. (See Graphic)

In the Cabinet Secretariat, which has 64 Group A officers, not one is from the OBCs, whereas 60 belong to the Open Competition (OC) category and four are from the Scheduled Castes.

## 'Older persons hardly aware of their rights'

### News:

Older persons in India are hardly aware of their human rights, which is a major cause of violation of their human rights, mostly within the four walls of their homes: noted a study on human rights of older persons in India by NGO Agewell Foundation.



### Findings of the Survey

- 9% of older persons had never heard of human rights of older persons.
- The foundation interacted and surveyed over 5,000 persons aged 60 years and above across the country.
- Over 23.3% older persons were found living in inhuman conditions and that every eighth elderly or 12.9% revealed that they did not get proper food in old age.
- Only 68% older persons claimed to have access to necessary medicines, healthcare and medical facilities.
- The survey also revealed that 48.6% of elderly persons were not respected by their family, relatives and society.
- Nearly 47% of them were discriminated against because of their age and were humiliated occasionally or treated disrespectfully.

The survey found that 65% older persons in urban areas compared to 57% elderly persons in rural areas reported living in abject situations due to violation of their basic human rights.

- Due to lack of awareness about human rights of older persons, particularly among the elderly, old people face increased incidences of age discrimination, ageism, elder abuse and mistreatment.

## India, Russia and China slam terrorism

**News:** In a joint communique issued after the 15th meeting of foreign ministers of **Russia**, India and China in New Delhi, the countries made it clear that their cooperation was not directed against any nation.

### Beyond News:

- Russia, **China** and India on condemned terrorism in all forms and reaffirmed their determination to prevent and counter it.
- They said that, those committing, organising, inciting or supporting terrorist acts must be held accountable and brought to justice.

The statement urged all countries to take adequate measures to prevent terrorist activities from their territory.

**DECEMBER 12 2017**

## General Studies-02

### Jammu and Kashmir govt. launches ‘Saubhagya’ scheme

#### News:

The Jammu and Kashmir government has launched “**Saubhagya**” (*Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojna*) with an **aim to provide free electricity connections to poor people** in the State.

#### Beyond News:

Saubhagya, an initiative taken by Prime Minister , seeks to provide electricity to 4 crore families across the country by December 2018.

The State’s Deputy Chief Minister said that,electric connections would be given to poor people, identified by the Socio Economic and Caste Census of 2011 and others sections for ₹500, payable in 10 instalments in the bill.

The scheme also promises on-the-spot registration of applicants.

### Supreme Court to pass orders on disabled-friendly educational institutes

#### News:

- The **Supreme Court** said it will pass order on a plea seeking to make higher education institutions physically accessible for differently-abled students.

## Beyond News:

- **Persons for Disabilities** (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, provided certain guidelines to be followed, which were not adhered to by **higher education**
- The Bench said 3% reservation provided under the law is now being followed by the educational institutions.

The Bench then outlined **three issues** — provision of reservation in higher educational institutions for differently-abled, all educational institutions being made physically accessible for differently-abled students and the scope of several provisions of the Act.

## SC Constitution Bench to examine if jallikattu is a cultural right of TN people

### News:

- The Supreme Court on Tuesday said a Constitution Bench would examine if the people of Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra can conserve jallikattu and bullock cart races as their **cultural right** and demand their protection under **Article 29 (1)** of the Constitution.



### Beyond News:

- Article 29 (1) is a fundamental right guaranteed under Part III of the Constitution to protect the educational and cultural rights of citizens.

**The law under challenge** — **Tamil Nadu's Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act of 2017** and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Conduct of Jallikattu) Rules of 2017 — opened the gates for the conduct of the bull-taming sport despite a 2014 ban by the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court indicated that the Constitution Bench would also look into whether the 2017 Jallikattu and bullock cart races laws of Tamil Nadu and

Maharashtra actually subserve the objective of “prevention” of cruelty to animals under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act of 1960.

The PETA petitions contend that the **2017 Jallikattu Act and Rules violate the five internationally recognized freedoms** — the freedom from hunger, malnutrition and thirst; freedom from fear and distress; freedom from physical and thermal discomfort; freedom from pain, injury and disease; and freedom to express normal patterns of behaviour.

### CCTV project for borders in limbo 2 years after SC order

The Supreme Court had on October 9, 2015, ordered that commercial vehicles entering the Capital should be charged an environment compensation charge (ECC) along with toll tax.

In the same order, the apex court had told the Delhi government to install CCTV cameras at nine major border points. The cameras were meant to help detect the entry of highly polluting vehicles, like diesel vehicles over 10 years old, which are banned from entering Delhi.



The cameras with automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) would be connected with the Centre’s Vahan vehicle registry so that vehicles from any State could be identified.

The system would help in detecting if diesel vehicles over 10 years old were trying to enter Delhi. The staff at the toll booths would then be able to turn away the vehicles.

## General Studies-03

### NCRB data: RPF reported 10.68L criminal cases in 2016

#### News:

10.68 lakh crime cases were reported by the railway protection force (RPF) in 2016, up from 9.42 lakh the previous year, according to data compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

## Beyond News:

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Maharashtra topped the list with 2,23,360 reported cases (or 20.9% of the total cases) in 2016.

**The RPF works directly under the Ministry of Railways** and its primary responsibility is to safeguard railway properties, including rolling stock, the permanent way and station or yard premises from damage or sabotage.

It is the RPF's responsibility to investigate incidents of vandalism, theft, etc. of railway assets and the properties.

**DECEMBER 13 2017**

## General Studies-02

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### Delhi Govt to foot accident victims' treatment bill

#### News

- Victims of road accidents, fires and acid attacks would be given free treatment if rushed to a private hospital, with the Delhi government picking up the tab.

#### Beyond News

- The Delhi Cabinet approved the scheme that is aimed at saving the lives of accident victims.
- Health Minister had first announced the scheme on March 10. The proposal would now be sent to Lieutenant-Governor Anil Baijal for approval.
- This scheme would help all victims of road accident, acid attacks and fires, whether they are residents of Delhi or not, get treatment at private hospitals near the spot of the incident.
- Delhi witnesses about 8,000 accidents every year with about 15,000 to 20,000 victims. In addition, 1,600 people lose their life in accidents every year.
- Apart from the scheme, the government's 'Good Samaritan Policy', under which anyone who takes an accident victim to a hospital would be given ₹2,000, would be launched.



## India, Australia call for 'open' Asia-Pacific zone

### News:

- Continuing with the strategic bilateral discussion, Australia and India discussed the need to **maintain the Asia-Pacific region as a “free” and “open” zone under the “2+2” dialogue model** which includes the foreign and defence secretaries of both sides.

### Beyond News:

- The discussion was the first meeting of this level since the two sides participated in the quadrilateral discussion for a new strategic partnership targeting the Asia-Pacific region.
- Both sides agreed that a free, open, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region serves the long-term interests of all countries in the region and of the world at large.

The dialogue indicated that the focus remains on freedom of navigation in the South China Sea, where China has been reclaiming land for infrastructure, boosting its maritime influence.

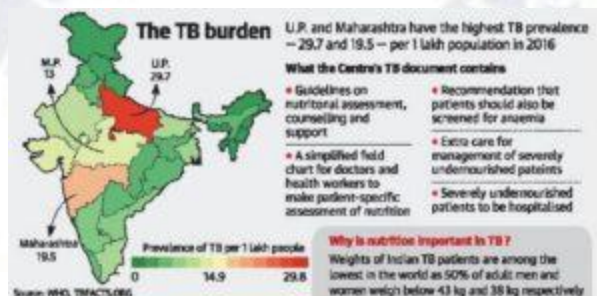
## Centre to give Rs. 500 to TB patients every month

### News

- About 35 lakh identified Tuberculosis patients across the country will soon get Rs. 500 every month from the Centre as social support.

### Beyond News

- The earlier proposal was to provide the benefit only to tribal and BPL patients, all the 35 lakh patients would be covered now.
- Some States are already providing financial support. Similar support will be extended to all TB patients and their families which can be covered under the ambit of DBT using Aadhaar.



## Rights bodies in T S , AP rudderless

### News

- Citizens' rights seem to have taken a back seat in Telangana and A.P., with five commissions for protection of rights being left either headless or memberless.


### Beyond News

- Two States celebrated Human Rights Day on December 10, State Commission for Human Rights, Lokayukta, State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, Child Welfare Committee and Information Commission have not been functioning to their fullest capacities.
- 
- While the SHRC, which has the powers of a civil court, has not had a Chairman and two members since December 21, 2016, Lokayukta's chair went vacant on October 11 this year. Telangana State Committee for Protection of Child Rights was nullified three months ago as the High Court found its selection process flawed.
- Child Welfare Committee (CWC) constituted under Juvenile Justice Act, that has the power of a metropolitan magistrate or judicial magistrate first class, had finished its term in February this year.

#### Misplaced priorities

- SHRC, which has the powers of a civil court, does not have a chairman and two members since December 21, 2016
- Lokayukta's chair went vacant on October 11 this year
- Panel for Telangana State Committee for Protection of Child Rights was nullified three months ago
- Child Welfare Committee (CWC) completed its term in February this year
- CWC chairperson and 4 members continuing in office though continuance of the term is usually not granted
- Information Commission, set up on September 13 this year, is yet to select nine more members



 The Centre should have bifurcated these institutions which fall under Schedule 10 of A.P. Reorganisations Act.

JUSTICE SUBHASHAN REDDY,  
FORMER HEAD OF SHRC & LOKAYUKTA



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## General Studies-03

### Petrochemical park to generate over 3,000 jobs

**News:** The proposed Petrochemical and Pharma Parks, being established on land purchased from Fertilizers and Chemicals Travancore at Ambalamugal, is expected to directly generate substantial number of jobs.

#### Beyond News

Kinfra and Kerala State Industrial Development Corporation, tasked with developing the park space, told that the petrochem park was expected to generate between 3,000 and 5,000 jobs. The pharma park on about 40 acres is expected to attract between 20 and 30 small and medium-sized units.

- The refinery capacity has been raised from 9.5 million tonnes to 15.5 million tonnes a year; it will produce **five lakh tonnes of propylene a year**.

The **objective of the project** is to assist downstream units, which would use niche petrochemical products to manufacture adhesives, plasticisers, water-based chemicals, sealants.



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**DECEMBER 14 2017**

## **General Studies-01**

### **Kumbh Mela declared as India's cultural heritage**

#### **News :**

- India's Kumbh Mela has been recognised by UNESCO as an "intangible cultural heritage of humanity."



#### **Kumbh Mela:**

- The Kumbh Mela, held in Allahabad, Haridwar, Ujjain and Nasik, represents a syncretic set of rituals related to worship and cleansing in holy rivers.

#### **Beyond News**

- The Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage under the UN body inscribed Kumbh Mela on the "Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity" at its 12th session in Jeju, South Korea. The meeting, which opened on December 4, ended on December 9.
- Kumbh Mela, considered the world's largest congregation of religious pilgrims, joins new elements from Botswana, Colombia, Venezuela, Mongolia, Morocco, Turkey and the United Arab Emirates on the list.
- The inscription of Kumbh Mela was recommended by the expert body which examines in detail nominations submitted by Member States.

The Committee also took note of the fact that knowledge and skills related to Kumbh Mela are **transmitted through the Guru-Shishya parampara (teacher-student relationship)** by way of saints and sadhus teaching their disciples about traditional rituals and chants.

# Hindu Notes from General Studies-02

## Prepare plan mapping air pollution sources: SC

### News:

- The Supreme Court on Wednesday directed the Centre to notify a comprehensive action plan mapping the sources of air pollution in Delhi and the National Capital Region within two weeks.

### Why this News Important?

- This is the **first ever** comprehensive action plan that has been adopted officially to mandate a time-bound short-, medium- and long-term measures to clean up the air of Delhi and NCR with a compliance strategy. This also helps create a template of action for all other cities of India.

### Beyond News

- The Bench of Justices gave the Ministry of Environment two weeks to finalise the timeline for each action point in the plan with the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA).
- If implemented with urgency and stringency and in a time-bound manner, this can help this region make sustained improvement in air quality.
- Delhi-NCR may require to reduce particulate pollution by at least 74% to meet clean air standards.

## Doklam was resolved to the satisfaction of all: India

### News

- Both the Indian and the Chinese Foreign Ministers expressed satisfaction at the resolution of the Doklam crisis during the just- concluded meeting of the RIC grouping of Russia, India and China.



## Beyond News

- During the meeting between External Affairs Minister and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in New Delhi, the issue of Doklam was raised.
- Doklam had put “severe pressure” on bilateral ties.
- External Affairs Minister and Chinese Foreign Minister both noted the challenge it had posed to the relationship and both expressed satisfaction that it was resolved with the disengagement of troops at the face-off site through concerted diplomatic communications.

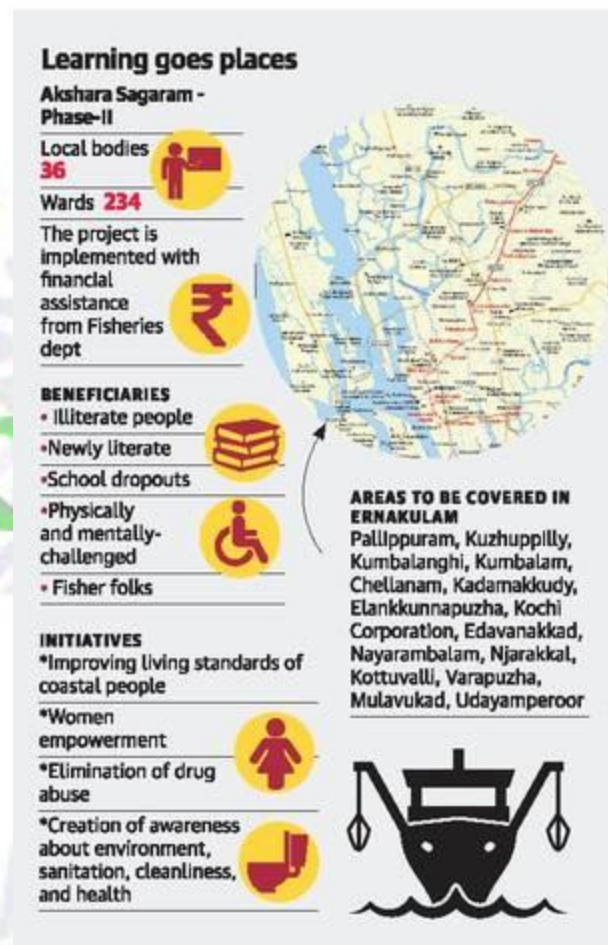
## Coastal literacy project to be rolled out in 3 more districts

### News

- Buoyed by its success in the first phase, the **Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority (KSLMA)** is all set to kick-start the second phase of **Akshara Sagaram**, an ambitious literacy programme for coastal areas, by rolling it out in three more districts, including Ernakulam.

## Beyond News

- The primary objective of the project is **to streamline the fourth, seventh and tenth standard equivalent programmes of KSLMA in coastal areas.**
- Illiterate people, newly literate, school dropouts, physically and mentally-challenged people, and all fisherfolks who have not cleared fourth standard have been identified as potential beneficiaries.



## Immediate benefits of the project

1. Improving the living standards of coastal people and coastal area protection measures,
2. women empowerment,
3. elimination of drug abuse,
4. creating awareness about environment,
5. sanitation, cleanliness,
6. Health, and various welfare programmes and services provided by the State government have been identified as the other immediate benefits of the project.

## WTO: India resolute on food security

**News:** In the final stages of the ongoing summit-level negotiations of the World Trade Organisation (WTO), India upped the ante to protect its food security right, even as the U.S. refused to agree to the demands of developing nations on the issue.

### **Beyond News**

- Initially, **India was bargaining hard** for improving an already available mechanism that safeguards government purchase of staple foodgrain from low-income and resource-poor farmers at subsidised prices for stockpiling, and then distributing them to the country's economically weak.

### **Peace Clause**

- The mechanism, called the 'Peace Clause', shields developing countries like India from being dragged by other countries to the WTO Dispute Settlement Mechanism for breaching the ceiling on product-specific domestic support (10% of the concerned crop's value of production).
- The 'Peace Clause' is available to developing nations, including India, till a 'permanent solution' is found by the WTO members to the issue of public stockholding for food security purposes.
- Peace Clause's onerous conditions (on notification etc.) make it tough for developing countries to use. Therefore, at Buenos Aires, India, along with other developing nations, wanted the 'Peace Clause' provisions to be improved upon and converted into a permanent solution a demand the U.S. showed little interest in accepting.

## General Studies-03

### Cheetahs must be listed as endangered , say scientists

**News:** Cheetah population in southern Africa found to be 11 per cent smaller than recent estimates, an international team of scientists has called for uplisting the cats' conservation status from "vulnerable" to "endangered" on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.



#### **Beyond News**

- Populations of cheetahs in southern Africa have declined as farming and other human activities push deeper into the free-roaming cats' range, said the study.
- Fewer than 3,600 adult cheetahs remain in the region, the researchers found.
- This new assessment is 11 per cent lower than the IUCN's most recent population estimate in 2015, adding urgency to calls from scientists to uplist the cheetahs' conservation status.

**DECEMBER 15 2017**

## General Studies-02

### Govt. clears Bill on instant triple talaq

#### **News**

- ➔ The government cleared a Bill that makes instant triple talaq or talaq-e-biddat a crime and provides for a jail term.

#### **Beyond News**

- ➔ Last month, the Union government had written to all the States for their comments as it plans to introduce the Bill in current session of Parliament.



- This proposed Muslim Woman Protection of Rights on Marriage Bill will adjudicate all cases of instant triple talaq across the country except the Jammu and Kashmir.
- As per the provisions of the draft bill, a husband who resorts to instant triple talaq can be jailed up to three years and be fined.
- Instant triple talaq in any form -- oral, written or electronic form -- has been banned and made a cognisable offence.
- The Bill also provides for a subsistence allowance of a harassed woman and her dependent children and the custodial rights of minor children.

## SDMC frames new parking policy, rates set to shoot up

### News

- The South Delhi Municipal Corporation (SDMC) has formulated a new parking policy, which could potentially be a model followed by the entire city.

### Beyond News

- The development comes in the run up to the enforcement of the soon-to-be-notified Delhi Maintenance and Management of Parking Rules 2017.
- This would be the first comprehensive parking policy for a city with as many as eight land-owning agencies at the core of which are strict fines and criminal proceedings against vehicle owners violating its provisions.



## NGT bans plastic items in Haridwar, Rishikesh

### News

- The National Green Tribunal (NGT) imposed a complete ban on plastic items like carry bags, plates and cutlery in towns located on the banks of the River Ganga like Haridwar and Rishikesh.

## Beyond News

- A bench also banned the sale, manufacture and storage of such items till Uttarkashi.
- The Green Tribunal also imposed 5,000 fine on those violating the order and said action will be taken against erring officials too.
- The NGT passed the direction after noting that despite its earlier order, plastic was being used in these areas causing pollution to the river.

## General Studies-03

### Kalvari submarine a big step in defence preparedness: PM

#### News

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi formally commissioned the first of six Scorpene diesel-electric submarines into the Navy .



#### Why this News Important

- This is the Navy's first modern conventional submarine in almost two decades since the INS Sindhusastra was procured from Russia in July 2000.

#### Beyond News

- The Scorpene submarines can undertake different missions including anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, intelligence gathering, mine laying and area surveillance
- The second of the Scorpenes, Khanderi, was launched in January 2017, and is undergoing sea trials.
- The third, Karanj, is being readied for launch shortly. The rest are in various stages of outfitting. The project is expected to be over by 2020.
- INS Kalvari is manned by a team of eight officers and 35 sailors.

## MIT scientists create plants that can glow in the dark

### News

- MIT scientists have found a way to induce plants to give off dim light by embedding specialised nanoparticles into their leaves, a major step towards using plants to illuminate the workspace.



### Beyond News

- This technology could also be used to provide low-intensity indoor lighting, or to transform trees into self-powered street lights, the researchers said.
- To create the glowing plants, the team turned to luciferase, the enzyme that gives fireflies their glow.
- Luciferase acts on a molecule called luciferin, causing it to emit light.
- Another molecule called co-enzyme A helps the process along by removing a reaction by-product that can inhibit luciferase activity.

*DECEMBER 16 2017*

## General Studies-02

### Cabinet clears Bill to replace Medical Council of India

**News:** The Union Cabinet cleared the **National Medical Commission Bill**, which does away with the Medical Council of India (MCI) and replaces it with a regulator that will do away with “heavy handed regulatory control” over medical institutions and will also bring in a national licentiate examination.

### Beyond News

- Among its key provisions is to ease the processes for colleges to manage undergraduate and postgraduate courses.
- Earlier, the MCI approval was needed for establishing, renewing, recognising and increasing seats in a UG course.

## Aims of the Bill

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- The Bill is aimed at **bringing reforms in the medical education sector** which has been under scrutiny for corruption and unethical practices
- The NMC also aims to be less draconian. Deterrence for non-compliance with maintenance of standards is in terms of monetary penalty — ranging up to 10 times the annual tuition fee — rather than the existing system of not renewing permissions in case of serious infractions.
- The new commission will also have the power to frame guidelines for fees for up to 40% seats in private colleges and deemed universities.

## A differently enabled company

**News :** For the first time in India, a company has been set up with the sole objective of supporting differently-abled artisans, by differently abled persons.

### Beyond News

- Handicrops Divyanga Impex, which was formed in Palakkad in Kerala recently, has eight directors, of which five are wheelchair-bound.
- It is an organisation run by the differently abled with the help of the public to encourage self-employment.
- It will assist people with disabilities and their families, individually or in groups. It will help them access skill development programmes, and financial and material resources.
- Handicrops already has more than a hundred members like Ranjini, most of whom work from home, making paper pens, LED bulbs, paper bags, umbrellas, handmade soaps, jewellery, and other handicrafts. The company plans to make devices such as electric wheelchairs, and efforts are on to enrol more people into its fold.
- Anyone who cares for the welfare of the differently abled can take shares in the company, with the minimum investment being ₹10,000, while the ceiling is ₹5 lakh.

## General Studies-03

### Mizoram becomes third power-surplus state in North-East, says Modi



**News:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that, Mizoram had become the **third power-surplus state** in the north-east after Sikkim and Tripura.

#### **Beyond News**

- Central schemes for the benefit of the north-east had gained momentum and government was committed to developing the region.
- It will be a significant milestone in the history of Mizoram with the completion and dedication of the 60-MW Tuirial hydropower project.
- With the commissioning of the project, Mizoram became the third power-surplus state in the north-east.
- The hydropower project would produce “251 million units” of electrical energy every year and boost the economic development of the state.

### Centre raises duty on electronic items

#### **News**

- The Centre has increased customs duty on several electronic items including televisions, mobile phones and microwaves, making the import of these goods more expensive and thus lending a fillip to its ‘**Make in India**’ programme.

#### **Beyond News**

- The custom duty on push button phones, including mobiles, and on smart electricity meters has been increased to 15%, from 10% now, as per a notification issued by the Ministry of Finance.
- The duty on products like monitors, projectors, water heaters, microwaves, TVs and lamps and light fittings has been doubled to 20%.

- This seems to be with the twin objective of increasing revenue as well as to encourage more manufacturing and value addition in India.
- Duty increases had been made under “emergency powers” included in the customs laws, and could prompt manufacturers in other industry segments to push for similar protection from imports.
- This would make import of these goods costlier and industry would be forced to explore domestic manufacture of these goods to reduce cost instead of importing these goods.

**DECEMBER 18 2017**

## **General Studies-01**

### **2500 year old cave paintings discovered on Indonesian island**

#### **News:**

- Scientists have discovered ancient cave paintings, dating from at least 2,500 years ago, on a tiny Indonesian island that was previously unexplored.



#### **Beyond News:**

- The team uncovered a total of 28 rock art sites on the island of Kisar which measures just 81 square kilometres and lies north of Timor-Leste.
- The paintings help tell the story of the region’s history of trade and culture.

Archaeologically, no one has ever explored this small island before.

- These Indonesian islands were the heart of the spice trade going back for thousands of years.
- The paintings they found depict boats, dogs, horses and people often holding what look like shields.

- The discovery pointed to a stronger shared history with the neighbouring island of Timor than had previously been known.
- The Kisar paintings include images which are remarkably similar to those in the east end of Timor-Leste.

The researchers said that, the relationship between the two islands likely extends back to the Neolithic period 3,500 years ago, which saw an influx of Austronesian settlers who introduced domestic animals, such as the dog, and perhaps cereal crops.

## General Studies-02

### Bill to amend Payment of Gratuity Act provisions

**News:** The government introduced a bill in the Lok Sabha that will allow it to notify the period of maternity leave and gratuity that can be availed by employees under a central law.

#### **Beyond News:**

- The Payment of Gratuity Act 1972 was enacted to provide for gratuity payment to employees engaged in factories, mines, oilfields, plantations, ports, railway companies, shops or other establishments.
- It is applicable to employees who have completed at least five years of continuous service in an establishment that has ten or more persons.

#### **Objects and Reasons of the bill.**

- ➔ The amendment would allow the central government to notify the maternity leave period for “female employees as deemed to be in continuous service in place of existing twelve weeks“
- ➔ The proposal comes against the backdrop of the Maternity Benefit Act (Amendment) Act, 2017 enhancing the maximum maternity leave period to 26 weeks.
- ➔ With respect to gratuity, the amount is calculated on the basis of a formula which is 15 days of wages for each year of completed services, subject to the ceiling of 10 lakh. This limit was fixed in 2010.

After implementation of the Seventh Central Pay Commission, the ceiling of gratuity amount for central government employees has been increased from 10 lakh to 20 lakh.

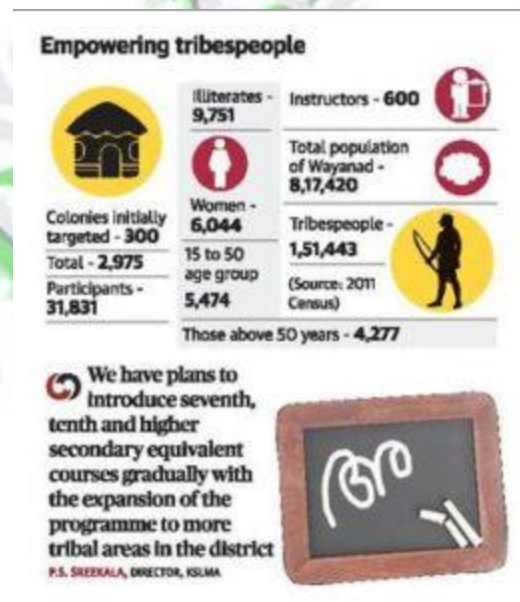
## Tribal literacy programme gets overwhelming response in Wayanad

**News:** The first phase of the Kerala State Literacy Mission Authority's fourth standard equivalent course has evoked overwhelming response in the tribal hamlets of Wayanad.

### **Beyond News:**

- The authority ventured into the tribal belt of Wayanad with its literacy programme after a **similar project in the Attappadi region of Palakkad proved a remarkable success.**
- The programme aims at eliminating illiteracy among tribal community members, rekindling a passion for learning among them through equivalent courses, and imparting civic sense through education.

According to the 2011 Census, of Wayanad's total population of 8,17,420, tribal people accounted for 1,51,443, the highest concentration in the State.



## Protest against Transgender Persons Bill

**News:** Members of the transgender community from across India gathered on Sansad Marg in the Capital (Delhi) to protest against the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016.





## Beyond News

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- The protesters said that the **Bill will snatch away the constitutional rights of trans persons** and demanded that the legislation be re-formulated through consultation with the community.
- Most gender non-conforming persons are **socially isolated and face immense violence even within their homes** as well as discrimination and marginalisation in education and employment.

Transgender activists said that the problem they have with the Bill is that the very definition of a transgender person is problematic and so are clauses with regard to criminalisation of enticement to beg, screening committees to issue a certificate of identity, lenient punishment for violence against transpersons, and the clause on family and residence, as they feel it violates the constitutional right to freedom of residence.

**DECEMBER 19 2017**

## General Studies-01

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### One third of new foresters in TN are women

**News:** 38 women have been appointed as foresters in various divisions to take up the challenging task of protecting the forests and its resources.

**Significance:**

- Another male domain has been breached.

**Beyond News:**

- All are now placed in 12 forest circles in the State and four women foresters have been appointed in the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve.
- Women perform well in police department and in other challenging jobs.

Their role is to protect the forest and its resource, plant saplings, monitor various programmes being implemented in the forest area, control the watchers and also carryout patrolling. Also, they have to prevent poaching in the forest areas in their jurisdiction.

## General Studies-02

### Rafale deal has better terms, cleared by CCS, says Nirmala

#### News:

- The Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) with France for 36 Rafales was arrived at to meet the critical requirement of the Air Force (IAF) and was cleared by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), Parliament informed.



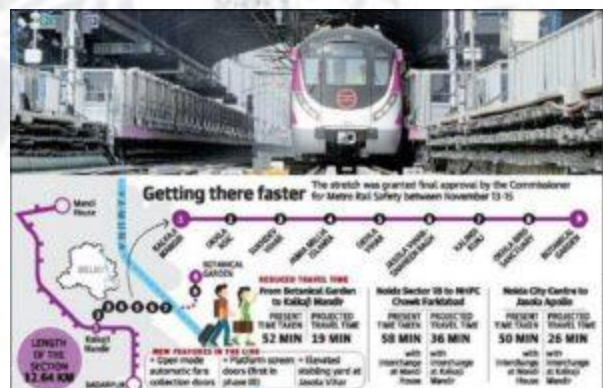
#### Beyond News:

- In the present procurement, 36 Rafale aircraft are being procured in direct fly-away condition under IGA between the government of India and French Republic.
- In the IGA, better terms have been achieved in terms of better pricing, better maintenance terms and better delivery schedule.
- In September 2016, India and France signed the €7.87-billion agreement for the aircraft, spares, weapons, 10 years of annual maintenance and associated equipment. The deal has a 50% offset clause to be executed by Dassault and its partners.

## General Studies-03

### PM Modi to launch Magenta Line section on Dec 25

**News:** Kalkaji Mandir-Botanical Garden stretch of the **Magenta Line**, which will reduce travel time between Noida and south Delhi, will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on December 25.



## Why its significant?

- This section will also be the model for **the first-of-its-kind signalling system, called the Communication Based Train Control (CBTC)**.

## Importance of Magenta Line

- The system will increase frequency of trains and the waiting time at platforms will go down to 90 seconds, from the existing two minutes.
- With the opening of this section, the travel time from Noida to south Delhi will reduce to just 45 minutes, from more than one hour.
- The Kalkaji Mandir station has also been developed as an interchange station and this will help reduce travel time between the Blue and Violet Lines significantly.

The section is part of the 38.23-km Botanical Garden-Janakpuri West corridor.

The line will also cater to two educational institutions: Jamia Millia Islamia and Amity University.

DMRC is making use of the latest technology such as the Unattended Train Operations-enabled trains that will ply on this route.

These trains have also been developed with the driverless technology, which is the first in the country.

## Green nod to Kaleshwaram a major milestone, says CM

**News:** Chief Minister of Telangana has welcomed the environmental clearance granted to the Kaleshwaram Project by the Central Government and said the project had reached a major milestone in securing the clearance.

## Kaleshwaram Project

- A mega project in Telangana designed to bring drinking water and irrigation to its parched areas has run into troubles with land acquisition and charges of cost escalation.



## **Beyond News:**

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- The project was given forest clearance for phase-I and II and had now received this clearance which is crucial.
- The Chief Minister's reaction comes in the light of the expert appraisal committee according clearance to the project claiming that there was no danger to environment on account of Kaleshwaram Project.
- The EAC said categorically that it had no objection to the construction of barrages, pump houses and canals as part of the project.

According to a release, the Government acquired 3,100 hectares of forest land showing alternative land elsewhere and releasing money for afforestation.

The project would serve 70% irrigation and drinking water needs of seven erstwhile undivided districts.

Land acquisition was progressing at a brisk pace after the Government enacted new legislation.

## **Govt mulling use of anti-smog guns to reduce pollution**

### **News:**

- Delhi government is mulling the use of anti-smog guns to bring down pollution levels in the Capital.

### **Beyond News:**

- As per the plan, a trial run of the anti-smog gun will be held at east Delhi's Anand Vihar ISBT. Environment Secretary apprised Lieutenant-Governor of the trial run of anti-smog gun during a meeting to review the detailed action plan of agencies and stakeholders on measures to combat air pollution.
- The L-G also directed all three municipal corporations to ensure no methane fires happen at the three landfill sites, and that they should take the help of experts from the Science and Technology Ministry for this.

The L-G was also informed that the Badarpur Thermal Power Station will be permanently closed by July 2018.

**DECEMBER 20 2017**

## **General Studies-02**

### **LS passes Bill repealing 245 old laws**

**News:** The Lok Sabha passed two Bills repealing 245 obsolete and archaic laws including the 1911 Prevention of Seditious Meeting Act.

#### ***Beyond News***

- Law Minister said that, many of them were “unfortunate part of the colonial legacy.
- The Minister said over 1,800 such laws had been abolished since the Modi government came to power.
- Parliament had repealed 1,029 laws in 1950.
- Some of the repealed laws were the Calcutta Pilots Act of 1859 and the Dramatic Performance Act 1876.


### **China a threat, India an ally: Trump**


**News:** President Donald Trump’s new national security strategy, promised support for India’s emergence as a “leading global power,” while identifying China, Russia and Islamism as main threats.

#### ***Beyond News***

- S. strategy document said that, they welcome India’s emergence as a leading global power and stronger strategic and defence partner.
- India finds a mention as a partner in Mr. Trump’s plans for South and Central Asia and Indo-Pacific, while China is named as a threat in both sections.
- The document also said that, America will help South Asian nations maintain their sovereignty as China increases its influence in the region.
- The document reiterates a series of announcements and speeches by

#### **The new order**

 We will press Pakistan to intensify its counter-terrorism efforts, since no partnership can survive a country's support for militants

 America will help South Asian nations maintain their sovereignty as China increases its influence in the region

NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY OF THE U.S. ANNOUNCED BY PRESIDENT TRUMP



the President and other senior officials in the last one year in the context of India.

- It said that, they will deepen their strategic partnership with India and support its leadership role in Indian Ocean security and throughout the broader region.

The document also underscores the warning to Pakistan. It also said that, they will press Pakistan to intensify its counter-terrorism efforts, since no partnership can survive a country's support for militants and terrorists who target a partner's own service members and officials.

### Japanese consulate general to provide aid for safe drinking water in Telangana

**News:** Two villages in Telangana will soon get access to safe drinking water with Japan's Grant Assistance for Grassroots Project.

#### ***Beyond News***

- A contract was signed in Chennai to provide financial assistance to set up the two water purification plants.
- Nearly ₹31 lakh is being provided as a grant to set up two water purification plants at Podichenpalle and Shankarampet villages in Medak district, Telangana.
- The organisation was mainly involved in providing safe access to drinking water to people in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Telangana.
- The initiative will benefit about 5,000 residents in each of these villages as the plant can treat 1,000 litres per hour.



### U.P. scraps free pilgrimage scheme for elderly Hindus

#### ***News***

- The government in **Uttar Pradesh** has scrapped **the Shraavan Yatra**, a scheme under which elderly citizens could undertake pilgrimage free of cost.

### *Beyond News*

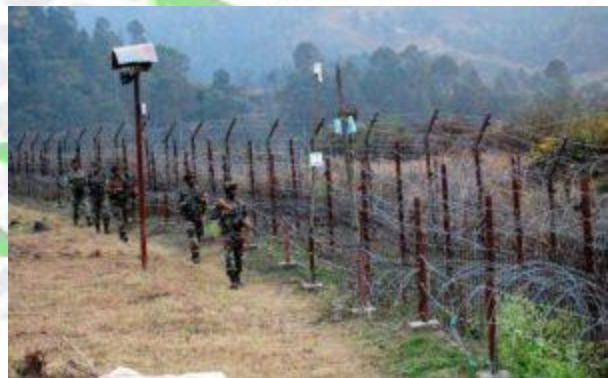
- Under the scheme, the government bore the entire boarding and lodging expenses for pilgrimage trips undertaken by senior citizens.
- The name of the yatra was inspired by the mythological character **Shravan Kumar**, who had carried his **blind parents on his shoulders for a pilgrimage**.
- This year, a shadow was cast over the yatra after the trips scheduled in October, November and December were cancelled as the IRCTC, which organises the travel, did not receive funds from the Religious Affairs Ministry even though ₹14 crore was allocated for it.

Pilgrimage trips were scheduled for Somnath, Dwarka, Madurai, Puri and Konark this year.

## **General Studies-03**

### 230% increase in ceasefire violations.

**News:** The government informed the Lok Sabha that, there was a 230% increase in ceasefire violations along the Line of Control (LoC) this year compared to 2016.



### *Beyond News*

- In 2017, Pakistan violated ceasefire 771 times along the LoC while the figure stood at 228 last year. There were 153 violations in 2014. There were 110 violations along the International Border in Jammu and Kashmir, the lowest in four years.
- Pakistan violated the ceasefire a total of 881 times along the Line of Control (LoC) and the International Border (IB) in Jammu and Kashmir this year, killing 30 people.
- **The 740-km LoC** is under the operational control of the Army and 192 km of IB in Jammu is manned by the Border Security Force.

The truce between India and Pakistan along the International Border, the Line of Control and the Actual Ground Position Line in Jammu and Kashmir came into force in November 2003.

**DECEMBER 21 2017**

## **General Studies-01**

### **'2017 may be among top 3 hottest years'**

#### **News:**

- The year 2017 will likely be among the three warmest years on global record, according to the **World Meteorological Organization (WMO)**.

#### **Beyond News:**

- Researchers said that the first 11 months of 2017 were the third warmest on record, behind 2016 and 2015, with much-warmer-than-average conditions engulfing much of the world's land and ocean surfaces.
- Arctic and Antarctic sea ice coverage remain at near record lows.
- 2017 may also be the warmest year without an El Nino — a climate phenomenon that causes global temperatures to shoot up.
- Data from NASA and the European Centre for Medium Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) shows that the past meteorological year (December 2016 to November 2017) is the second warmest on record.



## **General Studies-02**

### **No plan to take away J&K's special status, says Centre**

**News:** The government informed Parliament that there was no proposal as of now for abolition of Articles 35A and 370 which give special status to **Jammu and Kashmir**.



## Beyond News:

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- Abrogation of Article 370, gives autonomous status to Jammu and Kashmir.
- In case of Section 35A, a writ petition was filed in the Supreme Court by an NGO seeking its abrogation.
- The PIL said the Jammu and Kashmir government, under the guise of Articles 35A and 370, was discriminating against non-residents who are debarred from buying properties, getting a government job or voting in the local elections.
- Article 35A was added to the **Constitution** by a presidential order in 1954 and it empowers the State legislature to define the State's "permanent residents" and their special rights and privileges.

## 'Poverty, major threat to children's well-being'

**News:** About 17% of the girls were avoiding school during their menstrual cycle, and 26% of girls stopped going to schools due to lack of toilets, water and other amenities, according to a survey done by Young Lives, an NGO, and Centre for Economic and Social Studies (CESS).

### Findings of the Survey

- Children of the marginalised sections in the State continue to lag behind when it comes to education facilities, toilets in schools and nutrition.
- Giving the details of the survey at a one-day workshop on 'Poverty and Well-being of Children in Andhra Pradesh', CESS chairman said that one third of the children in India were living in families with very low income, and that researches showed that poverty was a great threat to children's well-being.
- The survey said that close to 40% of the children were suffering from malnutrition (25% stunting and 23% thinness) and one third of adults (parents) were suffering from chronic energy deficiencies, the chairman said.

## General Studies-03

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### Floating solar cells to produce fuel from water

**News:** Scientists have developed floating solar cells that can harness the Sun's energy to produce hydrogen fuel from water.

## Beyond News:

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- Hydrogen is a clean fuel that is currently used to propel rockets in NASA's space programme and is widely expected to play an important role in a sustainable energy future.
- Water electrolysis using electricity from solar photovoltaic (PV) offers a promising route to produce hydrogen without any associated CO2 emissions.
- The floating device can be thought of as a "solar fuels rig" that bears some resemblance to deep-sea oil rigs, except that it would produce hydrogen fuel from sunlight and water instead of extracting petroleum from beneath the sea floor, researchers said.
- The new device relies instead on a novel electrode configuration that allows the gases to be separated and collected using the buoyancy of bubbles in water.
- Based on the concept of buoyancy-induced separation, the simple electrolyzer architecture produces H2 with purity as high as 99 per cent.

**DECEMBER 22 2017**

## General Studies-02

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### **Support for terror outfits must be forced to stop: India at UN**

**News:** India has told the UN Security Council that, supporters of terror organisations like Taliban, Haqqani network and Lashkar-e- Taiba must be forced to stop and all safe havens must end.

### **Beyond News:**

- India also expressed concern over the collapse of security situation in **Afghanistan**.
- Terrorists continue to attack the most vulnerable, including the sick in hospitals, children in schools, devotees in mosques and even mourners at funerals. Terrorist groups have gained territory.

Deputy Permanent Representative of India said that, the support for terrorist organisations like the Taliban, the Haqqani Network, Daesh, Al Qaeda and its

designated affiliates such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e- Mohammed from outside Afghanistan, must be forced to stop.

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## **Black money: India-Swiss data sharing from Jan. 1**

**News:** In a move aimed at combating black money stashed abroad, **India signed an agreement with Switzerland** that would allow automatic sharing of tax-related information from January 1 next year.

### **Beyond News:**

- With the completion of the parliamentary procedure in Switzerland and signing of mutual agreement, India and Switzerland are set for automatic exchange of information for the period beginning from January 1, 2018.

A joint declaration for the implementation of Automatic Exchange of Information was signed last month between the two sides, and it provided that both countries would start collecting data in accordance with the global standards in 2018 and exchange it from 2019 onwards.

## **General Studies-03**

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### **Science Congress put off indefinitely**

**News:** For the **first time in its 105-year history**, the Indian Science Congress (ISC) the largest congregation of Indian scientists has been indefinitely postponed barely two weeks before it was to commence.

### **Beyond News:**

- This is due to “**security problems**” at the Osmania University, Hyderabad, where the event was to be organised between January 3 and January 7 next year.
- The ISC is traditionally the first public function the Prime Minister addresses in the calendar year.
- The choice of venue of a science congress is usually decided a year in advance and preparations are a massive logistical exercise that involves coordinating the visit of several Nobel Laureates, heads of Indian science academies and thousands of students.

## Severe pollution leads to warnings for NCR States

**News:** Delhi woke up to severe pollution with the concentration of particulate matter reaching toxic levels.

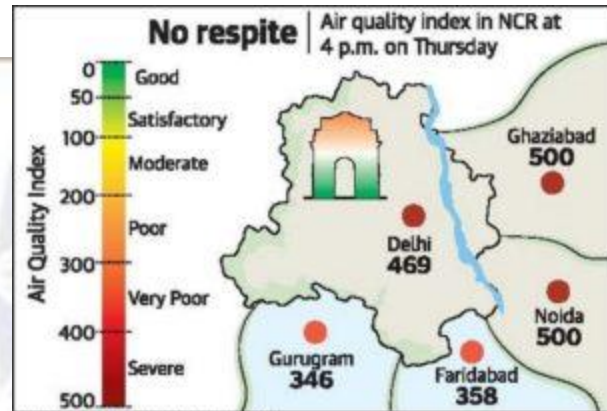
### **Beyond News:**

- A foggy morning also led to several train delays and cancellations, with reports of at least 15 trains being cancelled, 30 delayed and 11 rescheduled in several parts of northern India.

The Met department said that visibility fell to 400 metres in the morning in the Capital but there were no delays due to weather at the airport.

- The air quality index for Delhi, Ghaziabad and Noida were in the 'severe' category with values of 469, 500 and 500 respectively at 4 p.m., according to the Central Pollution Control Board.
- Taking action based on the air quality, the Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority issued warnings to the NCR State governments to prepare for emergency measures.

In letters to the Chief Secretaries of Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan governments, EPCA Chairperson said the level of both PM2.5 and PM10 were in the 'severe+' zone.

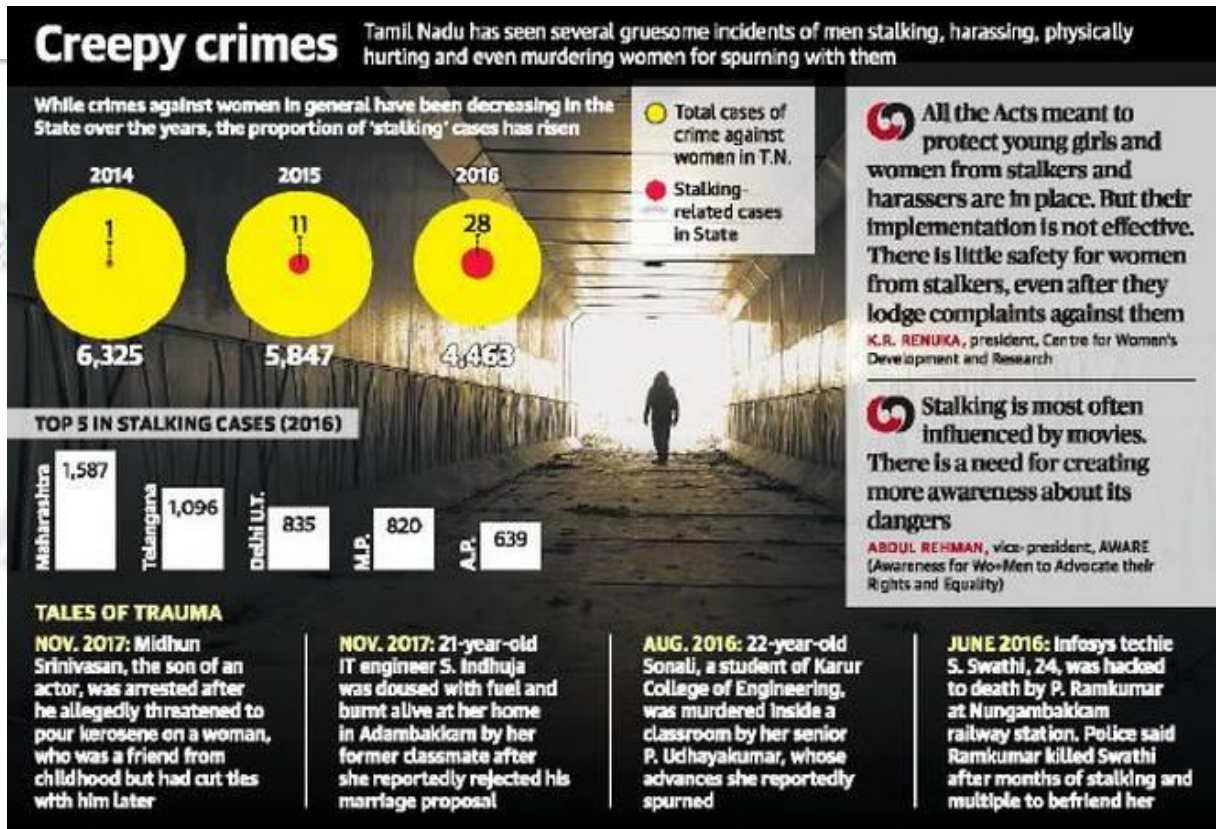


**DECEMBER 23 2017**

## **General Studies-01**

### Stalking cases up but convictions still o

**News:** Recent data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) is an indication; women from Tamil Nadu no longer shy away from lodging a complaint if they are stalked.



### Beyond News

- This is evident from the fact that in terms of number of stalking cases registered, the State rose up by three positions in 2016 compared to 2015.
- In 2015, with 11 cases, Tamil Nadu was in the 21st position among 36 states and Union Territories. The State moved up to the 18th position in 2016 after registering 28 cases.
- Crime like stalking was treated under IPC sections for eve teasing or outraging the modesty of women.
- **Now section 354 D of the IPC** states that any man who follows a woman and contacts, or attempts to contact, the woman to foster a personal interaction repeatedly, despite a clear indication of disinterest by the woman, can be charged for stalking, with a jail term of no less than one year.

### Solutions

- Awareness has improved among women, so many are coming forward to lodge complaints.
- Besides, stalking is being treated as a crime only recently, hence it will take some time to see the conviction rate increase.

- Many women face the problem of online stalking and remain silent fearing retaliation. There is a need for a better support system for women.

## General Studies-02

### Bill in Lok Sabha to protect slums

**News:** A Bill to provide three-year extension to a law that protects slums and some unauthorised constructions in the National Capital Region from punitive action till a framework for orderly arrangements are in place, was introduced in the Lok Sabha .

#### **Beyond News**

- Housing and Urban Affairs Minister introduced the National Capital Territory of Delhi Laws (Special Provisions) Second (Amendment) Bill, 2017.
- The Bill, which was approved by the Cabinet last week, provides for extending the provisions of the National Capital Territory of Delhi Laws (Special Provisions) Second Act, 2011 for three years from January 1, 2018.
- According to the Bill's Statement of Objects and Reasons, it aims to extend the validity of the Act to continue the protection to certain forms of unauthorised developments in the National Capital Territory of Delhi from punitive action for a "limited period", till December 31, 2020.

### Proud of India, says Palestinian envoy

**News:** Ambassador of Palestine said that, **Palestinians are proud of India and India's support to the cause of peace in West Asia.**

#### **Beyond News**

- **India voted in favour of a negotiated solution to the issue of Jerusalem** and against U.S. President Donald Trump's recognition of the holy city as the capital of **Israel**.
- Ambassador's comments came even as the government was praised by the Communist Party of India for voting against the U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.

- Israeli Ambassador Daniel Carmon reiterated his country's claim to Jerusalem in the backdrop of the developments at the **United Nations** General Assembly.
- Officials said India's reaction to Mr. Trump's statement had indicated that India would vote for the UN resolution.
- The resolution moved by the Arab countries received 128 votes for and 9 against, with 35 countries abstaining.

## General Studies-03

### Rare winged visitor to Wayanad sanctuary

**News:** Hitherto known as the habitat of the critically endangered White-rumped vultures and Red-headed vultures, the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary also be home to the endangered species of Cinereous vulture.

#### **Beyond News**

- Biologist of the sanctuary, spotted the Cinereous vulture, also known as Black vulture or Eurasian Black vulture, while engaged in fieldwork inside the Naikatty forest of the Tholpetty forest range under the sanctuary a few days ago.
- This is a key find as the species has never been reported from and a proper reconnaissance is needed to locate the habitat.
- Further studies have to be conducted to find the reason for the migration of the bird to the region.
- They are planning to intensify monitoring of carcass of wild animals to ensure the presence of the 'rare guest'.
- The Forest and Wildlife Department has launched a comprehensive project to conserve the existing vulture population in the sanctuary, a major habitat of different species of vultures in South India.
- The Union Ministry of Environment and Forests has earmarked ₹50 lakh for the project and they are planning to launch a series of awareness programmes to sensitize the public to the significance of conserving the remaining vulture population in the country.



## Anti-smog guns to reduce pollution?

### News:

- To deal with haze during winters, the Delhi government is mulling the use of anti-smog guns to bring down pollution levels in the Capital.
- It tested out an anti-smog ‘gun’ at Anand Vihar one of the most polluted spots in Delhi.



### Anti-smog guns

- Anti-smog gun is a device that sprays atomised water into the atmosphere to reduce air pollution.

**DECEMBER 25 2017**

## **General Studies-02**

## India cautious over Maldives curbs on envoy

### News:

- New Delhi appears to be weighing diplomatic options after Male reportedly placed restrictions on the movement of the Indian Ambassador to the Maldives.

### Beyond News:

- According to reports, the Maldives’ Local Government Authority has mandated that foreign diplomats in Male obtain government approval before meeting any Maldivian official.
- The government suspended three members of a local body allegedly for meeting Indian Ambassador Akhilesh Mishra without permission.
- Ibrahim H. Shihab, International Spokesperson at the President’s office, said the Indian envoy was a friend of the Maldives.



## 'India, EU air pact will spur tourism'

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**News:** The European Union's Mobility and Transport Commissioner has invited India to explore a deeper engagement in civil aviation through a comprehensive aviation agreement, and also suggested the need for a global agreement on railways.

### **Beyond News:**

- That will have a direct positive impact on tourism .
- Topics like safety, security, improving capacities of airports were all part of discussion.
- Road safety has become a very important global issue. It has been elevated at the UN level as well.
- Vision Zero is a multi-national road safety project that aims to achieve zero fatalities or serious injuries involving road traffic.

## **General Studies-03**

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### IACS develops hydrogel to remove toxic dyes and metal ions

**News:** Scientists from Indian Association for Cultivation of Sciences (IACS), Kolkata, have developed a **new gel that can remove toxic organic dyes and metal ions from waste water.**

### **Beyond News**

- They found the hydrogel began absorbing various commonly used dyes within 15 minutes.
- The dyes tested were malachite green, congo red, brilliant blue and rhodamine B.
- In the case of metals, the hydrogel was able to considerably remove commonly found ones such as cobalt and nickel from industrial effluents in about six hours.

Basic amino acids like leucine and phenylalanine were used to make the gel; the gel is biodegradable. It was stable at room temperature and remained as a gel for several months.

## Significance:

- The current methods used for treating wastewater adsorption using activated carbon, chemical precipitation or electrochemical techniques are largely ineffective due to incomplete removal or high energy requirements.
- In comparison, the new hydrogel-based material is able to remove the hazardous waste effectively as it has high water permeability, large surface area for adsorption and is also simple to use.
- The hydrogel can absorb the wastes for up to 60 hours before reaching a saturation point. The gel was able to remove 78-92% of the dyes and more than 80% metals ions.

The researchers say that the production of the gel can be scaled up to the desired volume for use in water treatment at industries.

## Mars absorbed water like sponge

### News:

- Scientists suggest that, the Martian surface may have **reacted with and absorbed the water** that once flowed on the Red Planet, making it uninhabitable.



### Beyond News

- Today's Martian surface is barren, frozen and uninhabitable, a trail of evidence points to a once warmer, wetter planet, where water flowed freely. The conundrum of what happened to this water is long standing and unsolved.
- The results revealed that the basalt rocks on Mars can hold approximately 25 per cent more water than those on Earth, and as a result drew the water from the Martian surface into its interior.

## IS, Al Qaeda competing for Indian recruits

**News:** Islamic State and Al Qaeda have been engaged in a fierce competition to promote their propaganda in India, **an analysis of messages posted on social media** platforms suggest.



### **Beyond News**

- In the past few months, both IS and Al Qaeda in Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) have been posting several provocative messages.
- A senior officer in the security establishment said they were monitoring the content but were particularly concerned with the Al Qaraar media of the Islamic State that has been posting 'Kashmir' centric messages.
- Intelligence officials strongly suspect that AQIS is being backed by the Pakistan establishment to carry out attacks in India on its pretext.

*Terrormonitor.org*, a non-profit watchdog that tracks the online activities of terror groups said AQIS had re-branded its media approach since it was challenged by the IS.

## Diagnosing early-stage cervical cancer using artificial intelligence

**News:** An artificial intelligence-based algorithm developed by a team of researchers from Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) Kolkata and Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur makes this possible.

### **Beyond News**

- The algorithm developed by the team not only differentiates normal and precancerous tissue but also makes it possible to tell different stages of progression of the disease within a few minutes and with accuracy exceeding 95%.
- This becomes possible as the refractive index of the tissue is different in the case of healthy and precancerous cells, and this keeps varying as the disease progresses.

## How it Works

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- The microstructure of normal tissue is uniform but as disease progresses the tissue microstructure becomes complex and different.
- The change in scattered light as disease progresses is marked by a change in tissue refractive index.
- The team has quantified the changes in tissue refractive index using a statistical biomarker multifractal detrended fluctuation analysis (MFDFA). The statistical biomarker has two parameters (Hurst exponent and width of singularity spectrum) that help in quantifying the spectroscopy dataset.

While MFDFA provides quantification of light scattered from the tissues, artificial intelligence-based algorithms such as hidden Markov model (HMM) and support vector machine (SVM) help in discriminating the data and classifying healthy and different grades of cancer tissues.

**DECEMBER 26 2017**

## General Studies-02

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### Parliament panel questions Centre on 'Neighbourhood First' policy

**News:** Proceedings of the Consultative Committee of the Parliament on External Affairs said that several members of Parliament from the Congress, NCP, the Left parties pointed out that India's ties with several South Asian neighbours faced challenges, **with particular mentions of Maldives and Nepal.**

#### Beyond News:

- Seeking an explanation from the government on the situation in the Maldives, a senior member of Parliament supposedly asked that, "why is India unable to address concerns of an island nation whose size is equal to that of [the Delhi neighbourhood of] Maharani Bagh?"
- The question created ripples in the meeting of the Consultative Committee which examined ties with Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, Nepal, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Myanmar and Afghanistan.
- India's commitment to Maldives is "serious" and relations were "close, cordial and multi-dimensional."

- India's ties with Maldives has turned cold since the first week of December when Male signed a Free Trade Agreement with China after rushing it through parliament.
- The Committee also raised the issue of visas for Pakistani civil society activists who wish to travel to India.

The meeting also discussed recent developments over the Doklam crisis with China and the ongoing negotiations over the Kulbushan Jadhav issue with Pakistan.

### **Japanese support behind new line**

**News:** The government of Japan on Monday congratulated the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) and the Central government on the inauguration of the Botanical Garden-Kalkaji Mandir section of the Magenta Line.

#### **Beyond News:**

- The government of Japan is supporting the construction of about 116 km-long section out of a total of 159 km of Delhi Metro Phase III, through the financing by Japan's Official Development Assistance loan, amounting to JPY (Japanese Yen) 276.8 billion.
- Japanese expertise and technology is also being made available to the Delhi Metro, in areas such as civil works, propulsion systems, signalling and telecom, track and project management.

The Japanese principles of railway safety management and project management are being implemented in Delhi Metro.

# General Studies-03

## Gene editing technology used to prevent hearing loss in mice

**News:** In a first, scientists have used a gene editing tool, CRISPR-Cas9 to prevent progressive deafness in mice, an advance that may help cure genetic hearing impairments in humans.

### Beyond News:

- A single treatment involving injection of a genome editing cocktail prevented progressive hearing loss in young animals that would have otherwise gone deaf.
- Since the study was performed in mice, the implications for treating humans are still unclear.
- Nearly half of all cases of deafness have a genetic root, but treatment options are limited. That is because, until recently, researchers did not have the technology to directly treat the underlying problem: the genetic mutations that sabotage hearing.

In humans, such a change could make a major difference in hearing-loss patients' quality of life. Scientists still have a long way to go before trying this approach in humans. If applicable, the treatment could be best during childhood as hair cell loss in the inner ear is progressive and irreversible.

## Mumbai gets country's first AC suburban train

**News:** In a Christmas gift to Mumbaikars, the country's first air-conditioned (AC) suburban train commenced its services today, thus realising the long-awaited dream of lakhs of commuters.

### Beyond News:

- Western Railway (WR) will replace 12 existing non-AC services to AC locals.
- Eight fast services will be between Churchgate and Virar, a slow local



from Mahalaxmi to Borivali, and three fast services between Churchgate and Borivali will run with AC coaches.

**DECEMBER 27 2017**

## **General Studies-02**

### **India's 1st pod taxi on the way, to follow U.S. safety norms.**

**News:** India's first pod taxi project has moved a step closer to reality after a high-level panel recommended inviting fresh bids for the same conforming to the strictest safety standards on the lines of those prescribed by an American body.

#### **Personal Rapid Transit**

- PRT is an advanced public transport using automated electric pod cars to provide a taxi-like demand responsive feeder and shuttle services for small groups of travellers and is a green mode of uninterrupted journey.

#### **Beyond News**

- The projected ₹4,000-crore pod taxi scheme also known as Personal Rapid Transit (PRT) is a dream project of Road Transport and Highways Minister, and the NHAI has been mandated to execute it on Delhi-Gurgaon pilot corridor (12.3 km) from Delhi-Haryana border to Rajiv Chowk in Gurgaon on a PPP (public-private partnership) basis.
- The ambitious project has been plagued by delays as government think-tank Niti Aayog raised some red flags, asking the highways ministry to direct initial bidders to prepare a 1-km pilot stretch as all the technologies were unproven.

Subsequent delays were caused due to formation of the high-powered committee to lay down safety and other specifications.

## Dalits hold rally, demand their rights

**News:** Chairman of the All India Confederation of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Organisations, Udit Raj, addressed a rally at Ramlila Maidan , demanding reservation in promotion and private sector.

### **Beyond News**

- The rally was also attended by leaders and members of the Dalit, SC/ST and tribal communities from across the country.
- Chairman had moved a private member Bill in Parliament for reservation to Dalits in private sector, but there were no serious developments made by the government.

He also said that as long as there is discrimination and prejudices against the underprivileged communities, his demand for reservation will be steadfast.

### **Major demands**

- Among the major demands made by the leader are reservation in promotion and jobs in private sector for Dalits, tribals and backward classes, ending of contract system and outsourcing, reservation in higher judiciary and Armed forces, increase in educational scholarships for the backward community students and law for implementation of Special Component Plan (SCP) and Tribal Sub Plan (TSP).

## General Studies-03

### Now, a big bubble theory

**News:** Scientists have said that the solar system could have formed in the bubbles produced by a giant, long-dead star, which was 40 to 50 times the size of the sun.





## Beyond News:

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- The prevailing theory is that the solar system formed billions of years ago near a supernova.
- But the new scenario begins with a giant type of star called a Wolf-Rayet star.

They burn the hottest of all stars, producing tonnes of elements which are flung off the surface in an intense stellar wind.

As the Wolf-Rayet star sheds its mass, the stellar wind ploughs through the material around it, forming a bubble structure with a dense shell.

- Meteorites left over from the early solar system suggests there was a lot of aluminium-26. In addition, studies increasingly suggest the solar system had less of the isotope iron-60.
- This brings scientists up short, because supernovae produce both isotopes.

This brought the scientists to Wolf-Rayet stars, which release lots of aluminium-26, but no iron-60.

As for the fate of the giant Wolf-Rayet star, the researchers believe that its life ended long ago, likely in a supernova explosion or a direct collapse to a black hole.

## 'India to become fifth largest economy in 2018'

**News:** India is set to overtake the United Kingdom and France to become the world's fifth largest economy next year, a report said Tuesday.

## Beyond News

- **Currently ranked seventh, India will move up to fifth place in 2018** and vault to third spot by 2032, the Centre for Economics and Business Research, a London-based consultancy, said in its annual rankings.

Growth slumped to 5.7% for the three months ending June but recovered slightly to 6.3% for the quarter ending September.

India's economy has still caught up with that of France and the U.K. and in 2018 will have overtaken them both to become the world's fifth largest economy in dollar terms.

## New system uses Twitter, AI to predict floods

**News:** Scientists are combining Twitter, citizen science and cutting-edge artificial intelligence (AI) techniques to develop an early-warning system for flood-prone communities.

### **Beyond News**

- Researchers have shown how AI can be used to extract data from Twitter and crowd-sourced information from mobile phone apps to build hyper-resolution monitoring of urban flooding.
- **MyCoast** is a system used by a number of environmental agencies to collect ‘citizen science’ data about various coastal hazards or incidents.
- The system contains over 6,000 flood photographs, all of which were collected through the mobile app.
- The information extracted by AI tools was validated against precipitation data and road closure reports to examine the quality of the data.

Flood-related tweets were shown to correlate to precipitation levels, while the crowd-sourced data matched strongly with the road closure reports.

Taken together, these tools can be used to monitor the water penetration of urban flooding over a city.

This can be then used to improve forecasting models and early warning systems to help residents and authorities prepare for an upcoming flood.

## First-ever hybrid bird species from the Amazon discovered

**News:** Scientists have discovered the first-known hybrid bird species to be found in the Amazon rainforest – **a golden-crowned manakin with yellow feathers.**

### **Beyond News**

- Through a series of genetic and other tests, researchers found that the golden-crowned manakin – first discovered in Brazil in 1957 but not seen again until 2002 – is in fact a hybrid species.
- A hybrid species forms when two parental species mate to produce a hybrid population. In this case, the two parents are the snow-capped manakin,

named for its bright snowy-white crown feathers, and the opal-crowned manakin, named for its brilliant iridescent crown feathers.

**DECEMBER 28 2017**

## **General Studies-02**

### **Parliament passes law to protect unauthorised colonies, slums in Delhi**

**News:** Parliament passed a bill to protect slums and unauthorised colonies in the national capital region from punitive action till a framework for orderly arrangements are in place.

#### **Beyond News**

- The National Capital Territory of **Delhi** Laws (Special Provisions) Second (Amendment) Bill, passed by Lok Sabha on Wednesday, gives immunity to slums and some unauthorised constructions till December 31, 2020.



The immunity under the existing Bill ends on December 31.

### **Israel takes India's vote in its stride**

**News:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to India in a fortnight will focus on taking cooperation on "double Ts" - Technology (including agriculture and water conservation) and (counter) Terrorism to the "next level".

#### **Beyond News:**

- Israel's unhappiness with India's vote at the United Nations last week had been put behind by both countries in a "diplomatic" manner.
- Netanyahu's visit comes close on the heels of India's decision to vote for a resolution that criticised the United States for its shift on the status of

Jerusalem and urged **Israel** to keep its commitments on talks for a two-state solution.

- Officials didn't deny that the Israeli government had lodged a protest with India about its vote, but indicated that India's stand had to be seen in the larger context of its growing alignment with Israel on other issues, and in particular Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel in July 2017 as the first Indian Prime Minister there.

## General Studies-03

### Bamboo not a tree: Parliament passes Bill amending Forest Act

**News:** The Parliament passed a Bill to exclude bamboo from the definition of tree under the Indian Forest Act, claiming it would improve the earnings of tribals and dwellers living around **forests**.



#### **Beyond News**

- The Indian Forest (Amendment) Bill, which was adopted by the Lok Sabha, was passed by a voice vote in the Rajya Sabha.
- Replying to a short debate, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Minister said the Bill to amend the 1927 Indian Forest Act would benefit the tribals, forest dweller and farmers as their income would increase.

The Bill permits felling and transit of bamboo grown in non-forest areas. However, bamboo grown on forest lands would continue to be classified as a tree and would be guided by the existing legal restrictions.

### India to pip China as top LPG importer

**News:** India is set to surpass China as the biggest importer of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) this month as a drive to replace wood and animal dung fires for cooking boosts consumption.

## Beyond News

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- Shipping data in Thomson Reuters Eikon shows LPG shipments to India will reach 2.4 million tonnes in December, pushing it ahead of top importer China, on 2.3 million tonnes, for the first time.
- China, India and Japan together make up about 45% of global LPG purchases.
- India's biggest supplier by a large margin is the Middle East, which has so far enjoyed a virtual supply monopoly.

**DECEMBER 29 2017**

## General Studies-01

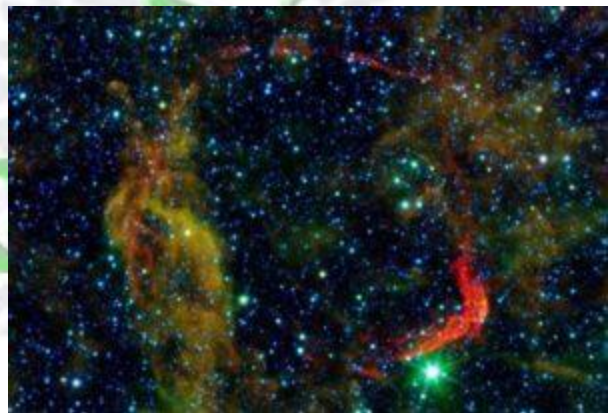
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### Exploding stars could be affecting Earth's climate

**News:** Cosmic rays raining down from exploded stars and variations in the Sun's magnetic activity can affect climate on Earth, claims a study.

#### **Findings of the Study:**

- These high-energy particles can influence the formation and growth of cloud condensation nuclei - the seeds necessary for forming clouds in the atmosphere.
- Since clouds are essential for the amount of solar energy reaching the surface of Earth, the implications of the study can be significant for our understanding of why climate has varied in the past and also for future climate changes.
- For the study, the researchers looked into the effects of cosmic rays on a simulation of Earth's atmosphere, which was recreated inside a cloud chamber - a sealed lab which mirrors the pressure and moisture of the upper atmosphere.
- Data was taken over a period of two years.



- The researchers said that the Medieval Warm Period around year 1000 AD and the cold period in the Little Ice Age between 1300 AD - 1900 AD both fit with changes in solar activity.

The implications of the study suggests that cosmic rays coupled with activities of the Sun may have affected the climate changes observed during the 20th century as well.

## General Studies-02

### Clear exit exam to get licence for practising Ayurveda: Draft bill

#### News:

- Medical graduates willing to procure a license to practice Indian medicine systems, including Ayurveda, may soon have to clear an exit exam, according to a proposed legislation on the lines of the health ministry's National Medical Commission Bill.



#### Beyond News:

- This is a part of a draft bill which seeks to create a new regulator, National Commission for Indian Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy, to replace the two statutory bodies governing higher education in homoeopathy and Indian systems of medicine.
- The AYUSH Ministry, in consultation with NITI Aayog, has formulated the inclusion of integrative medicine in the proposed bill which will enable AYUSH practitioners to practise modern medicines and vice versa after undergoing a “bridge course”.
- Proposed by the NITI Aayog-led panel, the draft bill known as National Commission for Indian Systems of Medicine and Homoeopathy, which seeks to replace Central Council of Indian Medicine (CCIM) and Central Council of Homoeopathy (CCH), also calls for AYUSH National Teachers Eligibility Test to bring in quality teachers in the traditional systems of medicine.

## General Studies-03

### Interceptor missile successfully tested

**News:** India successfully test-fired an Advanced Air Defence (AAD) interceptor missile, capable of destroying enemy ballistic missiles at low altitude, from a test range in Odisha.



#### **Beyond News:**

- The missile is being developed as part the Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system and it was the third successful test this year.
- The endo-atmospheric interceptor made a direct hit with the incoming missile at an altitude of 15 km, completely destroying it.
- The official stated that shooting down an incoming missile at lower altitudes is more complicated than shooting at higher altitudes due to the higher velocity of the missile.
- The BMD consists of two interceptor missiles, the Prithvi Defence Vehicle (PDV) for exo-atmospheric ranges and the Advanced Area Defence (AAD) missile for endo-atmosphere or lower altitudes.

### 'India leads in global milk production'

**News:** Union Agriculture Minister said that, during the past three years, India has outpaced the global milk production with an annual growth rate of 5.53% compared with the 2.09% achieved globally.

#### **Beyond News**

- India has been the largest producer of milk in the world for the past 15 years.
- Milk production, which was around 17-22 million tonnes in the 1960s, has increased to 163.7 million tonnes in 2016-17.
- Particularly, it has increased by 19% during 2016-17 in comparison to the year 2013-14.
- The income of dairy farmers increased by 23.77% in 2014-17 compared to 2011-14.

## Indian economic growth slowed down in 2016-17, says Government

**News:** Government said that, the Indian economy slowed down in 2016-17, with the gross domestic product declining drastically from 8 per cent in 2015-16 to 7.1 per cent the next year.

### **Beyond News:**

- Union Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said that the slower economic growth reflected lower growth in the industry and the services sectors, due to a number of factors including structural, external, fiscal and monetary factors.
- Slower growth in 2016-17 reflects lower growth in industry and services sector.
- Economic growth of a country depends on a number of factors including structural, external, fiscal and monetary factors.
- As per the latest estimates from Central Statistics Office, the growth rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at constant prices was 7.5 per cent, 8.0 per cent and 7.1 per cent respectively in 2014-15, 2015-16 and 2016-17.

**DECEMBER 30 2017**

## **General Studies-01**

### India yet to find reason for darkening Siang

#### **News:**

- The Union government has conveyed its views and concerns to the Chinese authorities, including at the highest levels of the government, on **the unusual darkening of the Siang river in Arunachal Pradesh.**





### Possible Reasons:

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- The reason for change in water of River Siang may possibly be because of any landslide/earthquake /any other activity in upstream region of Tuting site across the international border with China for which information is not available.
- Reports from Arunachal Pradesh and Assam blamed tunnel construction by China in Tibet.

### Beyond News:

- The change in colour came to light in November, and China holds an earthquake in Tibet responsible for it.
- Official reports of the colour of water in the Siang changing emerged from the Arunachal Pradesh office of the Central Water Commission (CWC) on November 10, attributing it to excess silt.
- Another report from the Arunachal Pradesh Water Supply Department showed that iron levels were **beyond permissible limits and samples from the river beyond Pasighat and Jonai showed higher aluminium and iron levels.**
- Government has conveyed its views and concerns to the Chinese authorities, including at the highest levels of the Government of the People's Republic of China, and has urged them to ensure that the interests of downstream States are not harmed by any activities in upstream areas.

## General Studies-02

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### China's ban on waste import a global warning: Greenpeace.

**News:** Environmental organisation Greenpeace said that,China's ban on importing 24 types of waste that comes into force on January 1, will serve as a wake-up call to countries that export waste to seek more sustainable methods.

### Beyond News

- The measure, announced in July, prohibits the entry into China of 24 types of waste grouped into four categories: domestic plastics, unsorted paper, various types of mine slag and textile waste.

- For Greenpeace, this prohibition will send warnings around the world and will promote the search for methods to generate less waste and to treat them adequately in the country of origin just as within China.

## General Studies-03

### ISRO to launch 31 satellites in one go aboard PSLV on Jan. 10

**News:** The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said it would launch 31 satellites, including India's Cartosat-2 series earth observation space craft, in a single mission on January 10.

#### **Beyond News**

- The mission will be the first 'Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle' (PSLV) mission after the unsuccessful launch of the navigation satellite IRNSS-1H in August this year.
- The mission's main payload would be India's Cartosat-2 series earth observation satellite.
- PSLV-C40 will be used for the launch from the spaceport in Andhra Pradesh's Sriharikota, about 100 kilometres from Chennai.
- The mission would be a combination of 28 nano satellites from abroad, including Finland and the U.S., one micro and one nano satellite from India along with one Cartosat satellite.

### Sun-like star found eating its own "offspring"

**News:** Researchers have found evidence to show that a Sun-like star 550 light years from Earth is slowly consuming its "offspring" - crushing one or more planets in its orbit into vast clouds of gas and dust.

#### **Findings of the Study:**

- The discovery that the star, RZ Piscium - located in the constellation Pisces .



- The researchers found the star's temperature to be about 5,330 degrees Celsius - only slightly cooler than our Sun's.
- The study also showed that the star could be relatively young.
- This discovery really gives us a rare and beautiful glimpse into what happens to many newly formed planets that don't survive the early dynamical chaos of young solar systems
- The discovery may shed light on a brief but volatile period in the history of many solar systems, including our own.
- In the case of RZ Piscium, the material near the Sun-like star is being slowly pulled apart to create a small circle of debris about the same distance from the star as the planet Mercury's orbit is from our sun.
- In the study, the researchers determined the gravitational strength near RZ Piscium's surface and the observation helped shed light on the star's radius and brightness, both of which suggest a young star in the midst of a freewheeling solar system with unstable planets.

## Hyderabad welcomes 'Robocop' prototype

**News:** Hyderabad may soon get its first 'robocop', with the launch of a prototype in the city .

### **Beyond News:**

- It can **take complaints, record audio and video clips, identify suspects, detect metals, and monitor temperature.**
- The policing robot has been made by H-BOTS, a Hyderabad-based **artificial intelligence (AI)** and machine learning start-up.
- The robot is expected to be familiar with **basic policing work, regulation of traffic, and details of the Indian Penal Code.**
- On subjects it is not familiar with, the robot will reply to queries by sourcing information from Wikipedia or Google, it has an AI unit inside.



- Its makers say it can be showcased as an advance in policing technology and eventually be introduced to carry out basic police work such as registering cases.
- In its present form, the smart police robot can assist people at malls, streets, airports and railway stations.

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**YOU CAN FIND NAME IN 2018 FINAL LIST**  
**WITHOUT STEPPING TO ANY INSTITUTES**  
*If followed right track!*

YES, I Want IASTODAY to guide me