

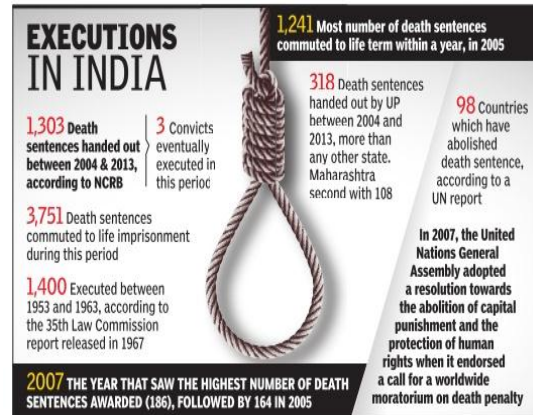
Constitution, Polity, And Governance – Dec'18

The Death Penalty Debate

Syllabus: Indian Constitution - Significant - Provisions

In News

- In questioning the merits of retaining the death penalty, Former Justice Kurian Joseph has re-ignited a debate.
- The law laid down in **Bachan Singh (1980)**, upheld the validity of the death penalty and provided that death penalty should be awarded only in **the rarest of rare cases**.
- Around **59 countries** that still retained the death penalty. India is one of them, even if it does not employ it as frequently as countries such as Iran, China, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the USA.
- Following the gang rape of a young woman in Delhi in December 2012, amendments were made to the IPC adding the death penalty for certain categories of rapes and repeat offenders. This year India introduced the death penalty for those who rape minors. The polarized debate that surrounded Yakub Menon's execution in 2015 was yet another reminder of the pervasive popularity of the idea.



Arguments In Favour Of Death Penalty

- India's peculiar circumstances:** In 1962, the **Law Commission (35th Report)** supported the death penalty stating that India's particular circumstances were such that it could not experiment with its abolition.
- Controlling law and order:** In 1991, the Supreme Court cited its use in defending law and order as the reason for its continuance.
- Problem of terrorism & neighbourhood:** India's neighbourhood is not peaceful, unlike Scandinavia. On the contrary, every day vested interests attempt to destabilize the very idea of our nation from across every border it shares. Moreover, cases of violent terror are constant reminders of the need to protect national stability by ensuring appropriate responses to such actions and the death penalty forms part of the national response.
- Moral support for the death penalty:** A punishment cannot be judged by its impact on criminals but by its impact on those who are still innocent.
- Retributive/Deterrence effect:** Those who defend the death penalty often do it on the basis of retributive justice. Moreover, its alleged usefulness extends from being a potential deterrent to serving as a primordial need for retribution.
- Limited application:** The judiciary has already circumscribed the application of death penalty by stating that it must only be imposed where the alternative option is unquestionably foreclosed.
- Rarest of rare cases:** The death penalty is imposed only in rarest of rare cases that shock the conscience of society. This is reflective in the fact that in the **last 13 years, only four** people have been executed.

Arguments Against Death Penalty

- **Introduction:** The death penalty is criticized mainly on three counts *i.e.* **arbitrariness, irreversibility and human rights**.
- **Morality:** The moral foundation of judicial killing has been questioned and it has been judged untenable in many countries.
- **Problems in implementation:** Implementation of the death penalty has also been deeply problematic. As the recent **Death Penalty India Report** by the **National Law University, Delhi** indicates, the structural flaws in our criminal procedure and criminal justice system are most pronounced in death penalty cases.
- **Arbitrary application:** There has been an arbitrary manner/application in which death penalty is awarded by different judges (**judge-centric variations**) and the way public discourse influences such decisions.
- **Pressure of public opinion on judiciary:** In individual cases the decision on death penalty depends on the nature of the crime, its gravity, cruelty and the number of fatalities. But in recent times, public outrage, the need for deterrence, and the clamour for a befitting punishment to render substantial justice have dominated the discourse.
- **Uneven application of the Bachan singh case:** The Supreme Court itself spoke of the extremely uneven application of the norms laid down in Bachan Singh. The same was also endorsed by the **Law Commission of India** in its **262nd Report** and asserted that there exists no principled method to remove such arbitrariness from capital sentencing.
- **Against reformation:** The death penalty has refused to consider the **Reformative theory of punishment** that focuses on reforming the individual.
- **Lack of deterrence effect:** No study has shown that the death penalty deters murder more than life imprisonment. The evidence is all to the contrary. For deterrence to work, the severity of the punishment has to coexist with the **certainty and swiftness of the punishment**. The death penalty has not deterred terrorism, murder or even theft.
- **Biasness:** Due to biases in criminal investigations, the marginalized, whether by **religious and caste denominations** or class are disproportionately subject to the death penalty.
- **Delay in criminal justice system:** The delays in the criminal justice system disproportionately affect those who suffer the tyranny of the uncertainty of their life.
- **International resolution:** In 2007, the **UN General Assembly** passed a resolution calling for a moratorium on the administration of the death penalty.

Way forward

- The Supreme Court has covered considerable ground in limiting the scope, to the rarest of rare case. Post-appeal reviews and curative petitions are routinely admitted. Review petitions are now heard in open court. The treatment of death row prisoners has been humanized and there is scope for judicial review even against a sovereign decision denying clemency.
- If there still prevails a perception of arbitrariness in the way death sentences are awarded, the only lasting solution is their abolition. The views of the Law Commission and Justice Joseph should not be ignored.

Governor's Rule And President's Rule In J&K

Syllabus: Indian Constitution - Significant - Provisions

In News

- The Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) will come under President's rule from 19th December 2018. It will be for the first since October 9, 1996, when the Farooq Abdullah led National Conference (NC) took over at the end of six years of direct central rule.
- The J&K has been under central rule **eight times** and moved from Governor's rule to President's rule (after six months) on two of those occasions. This will be the **third time**.

Background

- **Concept of President and PM:** Until March 30, 1965, the state did not have a Governor or Chief Minister; it had a **Sadre Riyasat** (President of the State) and a Prime Minister.
- **Restriction on autonomy:** In 1953, months before J&K's Constituent Assembly ratified the state's accession to the Indian Union, then J&K Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was removed and arrested. In another blow to the state's autonomy, New Delhi renamed the positions of Sadre Riyasat to Governor and Prime Minister to Chief Minister while Abdullah was in jail and his party was running a campaign for self-determination for J&K.
- **Difference in position:** Unlike the Governor, who is the Centre's nominee, Sadre Riyasat was a constitutional position elected by the J&K legislature and drew his powers from J&K's own Constitution. Even after the post was abolished, the centrally nominated Governor continued to enjoy powers that his/her counterparts elsewhere did not. Governor's rule is one of them.

J&K Governor's Position Different From Other Governor

- **Introduction:** In other states, the Centre invokes **Article 356** to impose President's rule; in J&K, under **Section 92 of the J&K Constitution**, the Governor can rule for **six months** with a set of powers, the only requirement being the President's consent.
- **Power with governor:** In Governor's rule, lawmaking power, financial power, budgetary sanction, all these powers are with the Governor. Once President's rule is imposed, lawmaking power is transferred to Parliament, the Budget is also passed by Parliament.
- **Use of Presidential orders:** Although the Centre needs Parliament's approval for extending President's rule but various government at Center hasn't taken that route. They extended it through **Presidential (Executive) orders under Article 370**. Thus, in this respect the state of J&K is put in a status inferior to that of other states.
- **Application of Article 249:** Further on July 30, 1986, the President issued an executive order under **Article 370** extending **Article 249** to J&K, which empowers Parliament to legislate even on a matter in the State List on the strength of Rajya Sabha resolution.
- **Other features:** Further, when President's rule is promulgated, the Governor has to seek clearance for every important decision from the Centre. But when the Governor suspends the Assembly or later dissolved it, he derives powers from the J&K Constitution.

Data Interception Order by MHA

Syllabus: Indian Constitution - Significant - Provisions

In News

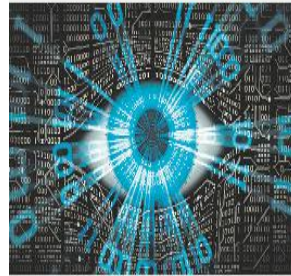
- A political storm erupted after the Home Ministry issued a notification authorizing 10 intelligence and security agencies to intercept data on computers, mobile devices and servers used by Indians to implement **Section 69(1) of Information Technology (IT) Act**.

- The authorised agencies are the Intelligence Bureau, Narcotics Control Bureau, Enforcement Directorate, Central Board of Direct Taxes, Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, CBI, National Investigation Agency, Research and Analysis Wing, Directorate of Signal Intelligence (in Jammu & Kashmir, the North-East and Assam) and Delhi Police.

- Under the order, an individual who fails to assist these government agencies with technical assistance or extend all facilities can face up to **7 years** of imprisonment or be liable to be fined.
- The Opposition uniting against the move and dubbed it as unconstitutional, undemocratic and an assault on fundamental rights.

New list, old rules

A look at what the fuss over the Home Ministry's order authorising 10 agencies to intercept computer-based information is all about



▪ Provision for interception of information from computer resources exists since 2000. Sec.69(1) of the Information Technology Act, 2000 allowed this in the interest of the country's sovereignty and integrity, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign States, or public order or incitement to offence

▪ Section 69 was amended in 2008 to enable the Centre and the State governments to "intercept, monitor or decrypt" any information transmitted through, received or stored in a computer

RULES

▪ Rules were framed in 2009 setting out the procedure and safeguards. Rule 3 says 'the competent authority' (the Home Secretary in the Centre and the States) alone can issue an order for interceptioning

▪ Rule 4 says the competent

authority may authorise a government agency to carry out the task

▪ The present order naming 10 agencies has been issued under Rule 4. It does not introduce any new surveillance norm or rule

PROCEDURE

▪ The agencies also must go only by procedure laid down in the same 2009 Rules for carrying out these tasks.

▪ Any direction for interception shall contain reasons, and a copy should be to a 'Review

Committee' within seven days. The authority, before issuing the order, should also consider getting the required information by other means

▪ An interception order will be in force only for a maximum of 60 days. Rules have also been framed outlining the intermediary's responsibilities

▪ The Review Committee should meet once in two months. It has the power to set aside interception orders and direct the destruction of records if procedure is not followed

Legal Provisions For Interception

- **Telegraph Act:** Lawful interception of phones and computers can be done by the governments at the Centre and in the states under **Section 5(2) of Indian Telegraph Act, 1885**. Further, all copies of the intercepted material must be destroyed as soon as their retention is not necessary under Section 5(2).
- **Rules:** The orders of the competent authority clearing lawful interception are reviewed by a **Review Committee**. Thus, as per **Rule 22 of IT Rules, 2009**, all cases of interception and monitoring or decryption should be placed before review committee headed by the **Cabinet Secretary**, which meets **once in two months** to go through individual instances. At the State level, it is headed by the **Chief Secretary**.
- **Punishment:** If done illegally, it is punishable under **Sections 25 & 26** that provide for imprisonment up to **three years** with or without a fine.

Justification For The Move

- **In consonance with constitutional provisions:** The premise for interception power are exactly the same as defined in **Article 19 (2)** of the Constitution, where the exclusion of the fundamental right of the freedom of expression applied.
- **Process of law:** The government justified the move on the ground that it merely fulfilled a requirement under **Rule 4 of the IT (Procedure and Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring and Description of Information) Rules, 2009**. This stipulates that the government should list the agencies empowered for the purpose of interception, monitoring and decryption of any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer resource.
- **Implementing the law:** Thought the legislation was introduced during the term of the previous government but the list of authorised agencies hadn't been drawn up at the time.

- **Streamline the interception process:** The initiative in no way gave sweeping powers to the government to peek at emails and other online activities. On the contrary, it would help streamline the process of interception sought under **Section 69 of the Information Technology (IT) Act, 2000**, weeding out any unlawful attempts to do so by government agencies.
- **Existing provisions confer similar right:** The move doesn't confer any new powers on it and adequate safeguards have been provided in the **IT Act, 2000**. Similar provisions and procedures already exist in the **Telegraph Act** along with identical safeguards.
- **Sufficient review mechanism:** The entire process is also subject to a robust review mechanism as in case of Telegraph Act. Every individual case will continue to require prior approval of the Home Ministry (MHA) or state government. MHA has not delegated its powers to any law enforcement or security agency.
- **Right to privacy is not absolute:** In today's times, when fake news and illegal activities such as cyber terrorism on the dark web are on the rise, the importance of reserving such powers to conduct surveillance cannot be undermined.
- **Protecting security of nation:** Many online nefarious activities of anti-national and terrorist organisations actually require a readiness on the online surveillance aspect. Further, the notification was much needed to equip forces in cyber warfare as the country's economy drives along the e-way. Thus, cyber notification was much needed for safety of installation and critical infrastructure from cyber attacks.
- **To overcome practical challenge:** Internet companies like US based Google and WhatsApp express reservation if requests for information in individuals' cases, routed to them through the IT ministry, come from agencies not notified through law or a government rule. Moreover, the notification is also meant to back these agencies to withstand judicial scrutiny of Indian courts.

Concerns

- **Right to privacy:** The order has been perceived as the encroachment upon the right to privacy, which is a fundamental right. Moreover, after the SC's decision in the privacy and Aadhaar cases these legal provisions are untenable. **For example-** in 2015, Andhra Pradesh police registered cases in different police stations on allegations of phone tapping of TDP MLAs. Similarly, in 2013, a Delhi Police constable and three private detectives were charged for obtaining call details records of Arun Jaitley, the then Leader of Opposition in Rajya Sabha.
- **Impact on freedom of speech:** In the absence of judicial or legislative oversight, such powers result in a chilling effect on the freedom of speech and association and democratic participation.
- **Violation of the legal provisions:** The actual notification itself does not clearly require the Union Home Secretary to pre-approve such surveillance orders. In contrast, the legal regime under the older Telegraph Act and its rules still explicitly requires the appropriate Home secretary to pre-approve wiretapping orders, except in emergency situations.
- **Vague grounds:** Presently, the grounds of surveillance remain as broad and vaguely worded under the Telegraph and IT act.
- **Lack of public debate:** It is also jarring that the notification was not preceded by any public discussion, consultation or parliamentary debate.
- **Lack of external oversight:** Further, current surveillance infrastructure lacks proper transparency and accountability. It is completely under executive control, with no Parliamentary or Judicial oversight, either ex-ante or ex-post, of surveillance measures. This is in stark contrast to the situation in other countries such as **Germany, South Africa, UK and the US**.

- **Natural justice issue:** Section 69 also falls short of meeting with the principles of natural justice by failing to accommodate pre-decisional hearings. The Section only makes post-decisional hearings before a Review committee possible as a part of its procedure.
- **Lack of statutory basis:** Many agencies listed in the notification, such as the Intelligence Bureau and R&AW lack statutory basis.
- **Police state:** Sweeping powers have been given to government agencies and this will turn India into a police state.
- **Other issues:** The MHA notification did not provide the procedure or the object for such an exercise or the quantum of period for which a person's private data could be intercepted.

Final Analysis

- The MHA notification raises the larger issue that our current communications surveillance and data access laws are contradictory, anachronistic and insufficient to protect privacy, rule of law and institutional accountability in digital India.
- India urgently needs a Privacy Act, which will specifically address issues of surveillance and interception, an issue left unaddressed in the **Draft Data Protection Bill** released by the **Justice Srikrishna Committee**.
- Moreover, all measures within such a framework must pass the **test of proportionality** specified by the Right to Privacy judgment.

Misuse of National Security Act

Syllabus: Indian Constitution - Significant - Provisions

In News

- The detention of a Manipuri journalist under the stringent *National Security Act* for a social media post regarding Manipur Chief Minister (CM) has seen by many as a clear instance of misuse of power and a blatant violation of his rights as a citizen.
- A magistrate granted him bail, noting that his remarks were no more than an expression of opinion against the public conduct of a public figure.
- However, the journalist after being set free was arrested again a couple of days later and detained under the NSA, which provides for **detention for a year** without bail to prevent someone from acting in any manner prejudicial to the security of the state or for the maintenance of public order.

Analysis Of The Arrest Decision

- **Constitutional Rights:** It indicates a dangerous trend among those wielding power to invoke laws aimed at preserving public order and security in a casual or vindictive manner, with utter disregard for constitutional provisions that uphold individual liberty.
- **Not a Proper Use of NSA:** The NSA can be used only against those advocating armed insurrection or violent disaffection. It is shocking that the statutory advisory board held there was sufficient cause for detention, when he posed no threat to public order or security.
- **Question over the legality:** It is questionable whether a person can be detained under the NSA for one year at a go, as its provisions say the detention can only be for **three months** at a time and up to **one year in total**. This position has also been confirmed by the Supreme Court.

- **Role of the Advisory board:** The NSA advisory board consists of three members who are or have been or are qualified to be High court judges. It is not expected to approve detention orders in a routine or mechanical manner.

Way Forward

- At a time when the Law Commission is revisiting **Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code**, which deals with sedition and there is a demand for its repeal, it is disturbing that State governments continue to use it.
- It is even more deplorable that on failing to make the sedition charge stick, a government puts away the same person under the NSA. This is a fit case for judicial review and the protests and the outrage against such move. This will inhibit any future move to throttle free expression by misusing the law.

Judicial Law Making

Syllabus: Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions.

In News

Developments in the aftermath of the Supreme Court's (SC) decision in the Sabarimala case have reignited a national debate on the profound question of the limits of judicial power in a parliamentary democracy.

Justification

- **Filling in legislative gaps:** The Court has justified judicial lawmaking in seeking to fill the gaps in legislation as part of an interpretative exercise exclusively within its writ.
- **Creation of new rights:** The Court's expansive and creative exercise of judicial power has been accepted by the nation primarily because of its stellar contribution towards the broadening of human rights by invoking the **Doctrine Of Progressive Realisation Of Rights**.
- **Protector of constitutional morality:** By reading the **Right to Dignity** into **Article 21** to the pinnacle of the rights hierarchy, the Court has validated its role as the arbiter of constitutional morality.

Arguments Against Judicial Law Making

- **Violation of separation of power:** India faces a widely held perception of judicial overreach and the unsettling of a constitutionally ordained dispersal of power between the three organs of the state.
- **Law making essentially a function of legislature:** Making laws is the function of the legislature and one organ or part of the state should not usurp functions that essentially belong to another.
- **Court should only interpret law:** Role of judges should be limited to only interpretation of law and should leave the law making business to the legislature and the executive.
- **Against democracy:** Since judiciary is a non-elective body, it does not enjoy popular will to make laws.
- **Judicial overreach:** Although the earlier instances of Judicial Activism were connected with enforcing fundamental rights (FR) but nowadays, Judiciary has started interfering in the governance issues as well.
- **No constitutional backing:** Judicial Activism or overreach has no constitutional articles to support its origin.
- **Confusion:** If judges are free to make laws of their choices, it could also lead to uncertainty in the law and chaos as every judge will start drafting his own laws according to his whims and fancies.

Way forward

The judiciary should tread with circumspection when entering into judicial law making and any such step should be as a measure of last resort.

Andhra Pradesh, Telangana To Have Separate High Courts

Syllabus: Structure, organization, and functioning of Judiciary and Related Issues

In News

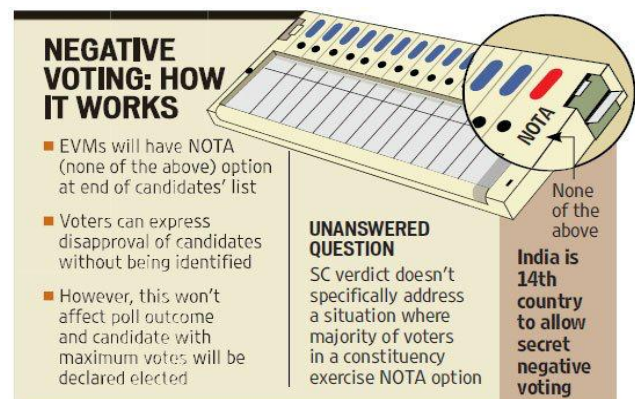
- **Order of the President:** Following a Supreme Court (SC) order to the Centre to notify the bifurcation of the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana High Courts (HC) by January 1, 2019 the President Ram Nath Kovind ordered the separation of the common Hyderabad High Court into the separate High Courts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.
- **Legal basis of the decision:** The Presidential notification quoted **Article 214** of the Constitution, which provides for a High Court for each State. The Presidential notification also pointed out that under the **Andhra Pradesh Reorganization Act, 2014**, both States were to have a common High court, till separate ones were formed.
- **The seat of the HC:** The principal seat of the Andhra Pradesh High Court is **Amaravati**, the capital of the State. The High Court in Hyderabad will function separately as the High Court of the State of Telangana.
- **Strength of the HC:** 16 HC judges, including **Justice Ramesh Ranganathan**, who is now the Chief Justice of the Uttarakhand High Court, shall become judges of the Andhra Pradesh HC. While, the new Telangana High Court will have a sanctioned strength of 10 judges

Implementation of NOTA

Syllabus: Elections and Representation of People's Act

In News

- In **People's Union For Civil Liberties v. Union Of India**, the Supreme Court (SC) had ruled that a None of the Above (NOTA) option may be provided in EVMs so that voters are able to exercise their Right not to vote while maintaining their **Right of Secrecy**.
- Earlier, the option was as per **Rule 49-O of Conduct of Election Rules**, whereby the voters were required to register their option of NOTA in a register. But this compromised the secrecy of the voters.



Benefits of NOTA

- **More choice:** By providing NOTA button in the EVMs, accelerated the effective political participation in the present state of democratic system and the voters were empowered. Thus, it ensured wide participation of people.
- **Pressure on political party:** When the political parties realize that a large number of people are expressing their disapproval with the candidates, there will be a systemic change and the political

parties will be forced to accept the will of the people and field candidates who are known for their integrity.

- **Against high command culture:** NOTA can also be used as an protest against the high command culture that involves forcing of candidates from top-down.
- **Secrecy of vote ensured:** By implementing the NOTA button on EVMs, the right to vote and right to not to vote have been kept at same pedestal, while maintaining secrecy.
- **International practice:** India became the **12th country** to introduce NOTA or a similar option in its electoral proceedings. Other countries which provide this option are- **France, Belgium, Greece, Brazil, and Bangladesh.**

The Question Over Its Significance

- **Clarification by the EC:** The Election Commission of India (ECI) further clarified that if a situation arose where the number of NOTA votes exceeded the number of votes polled by any of the candidates, the candidate with the highest number of votes would be declared winner. This, it said, was in accordance with **Rule 64 of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961.**
- **No impact on result:** The above mentioned provision made the NOTA option almost redundant. While it ensured confidentiality for a voter who did not want to choose any of the candidates and yet wished to exercise her franchise, the provision clarified that a NOTA vote would not have any impact on the election result, which is what interests candidates, political parties and voters.
- **Small share in overall votes:** NOTA polling figures are still small. Therefore in the constituencies the NOTA votes does not make a difference to the election results.
- **No desired impact:** There was a larger perception that NOTA will play a role of cleansing politics. Because if the candidates are not upto the certain standard than the large number of voters may exercise their negativity and by that put pressure in the political process. Though it was a noble idea, unfortunately till now, it did not happen in a very large scale.
- **Wastage of vote:** There is also a view against NOTA that choosing the option meant wasting a vote.

Best Practice

- **Maharashtra SEC:** The State Election Commission (SEC) of Maharashtra was the first to understand the spirit of the judgment. It issued a reasoned order in June 2018 by saying that if it is noticed while counting that NOTA has received highest number of valid votes, then the said election for that particular seat shall be countermanded and fresh elections shall be held for such post.
- **Haryana SEC:** The SEC of Haryana, in an order in November 2018 stated that if all the contesting candidates individually receive lesser votes than NOTA, then not only would none of the contesting candidates be declared as elected, but all such contesting candidates who secured less votes than NOTA shall not be eligible to re-file the nomination/contest the re-election.

Way Forward

- NOTA has a moral dimension but also a long term reformative aspect. Presently, it will only enable a voter not to vote in favour of any candidate. However, this may result in parties nominating better candidates which strengthens the democracy further.
- Moreover, with two SECs showing the way, the remaining SECs and the ECI should follow suit so that political parties are compelled to nominate sound candidates and are forced to accept the will of the people.

EC Wants Capping on Party's Expenditure on Candidates

In News

- **Introduction:** The Election Commission (EC) has reiterated its position to the Law Ministry that a political party should limit its spending on a candidate during election to not more than **50% or half** of the candidate's expenditure limit.
- **Current position:** While the EC has been unable to cap a political party's expenditure in an election, it has put expenditure limit on candidates *i.e.* **50-70 lakh for each Lok Sabha candidate** and **Rs. 20-28 lakh for an assembly candidate**.
- **Change in law:** In the past, the Commission had recommended amendments to the **Representation of the People Act** and **Rule 90 of The Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961**, for the same.
- **Rationale:** The EC has identified unchecked money power as one of the biggest concerns and has been rooting for capping party and campaign expenditure to ensure a level playing field for all parties and to check the money power visible during every elections.
- **Implications:** This means if the government accepts the EC recommendations, a political party may not be able to spend more than **Rs. 25-35 lakh** per candidate in case of Lok Sabha elections and not more than **Rs. 10-14 lakh** per candidate in case of assembly elections.

Second Delta Ranking of Aspirational Districts

Syllabus: Government Policies and Interventions For Development In Various Sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

In News

- NITI Aayog has released the Second Delta Ranking of the Aspirational districts Programme (ADP).
- The ranking measures the incremental progress made by 111 aspirational districts between June 1, 2018, and October 31, 2018, across six developmental areas.
- The districts have been ranked in a transparent basis on parameters across **Health & Nutrition, Education, Agriculture & Water Resources, Financial Inclusion, Skill Development and Basic Infrastructure** through key performance indicators.
- The rankings are based on the data that is publicly available through the Champions of Change Dashboard, which includes data entered on a real-time basis at the district level.
- The rankings, for the first time, will also factor in inputs from household survey conducted by NITI Aayog's knowledge partners, namely, **TATA Trust and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)**.
- **Virudhunagar (Tamil Nadu), Naupada (Odisha) and Sidharthnagar (Uttar Pradesh) have emerged as the top three districts in the rankings.**
- Pakur (Jharkhand), Hailakandi (Assam) and Chatra (Jharkhand) are three least improved aspirational districts.
- The aspirational district programme was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in January 2018.
- Of 115 aspirational districts, only 111 participated in the survey. Three districts from West Bengal did not participate, while one district of Kerala could not take part because of floods. The first delta ranking for aspirational districts was released in June 2018.

- It aims to rapidly transform districts that have shown relatively lesser progress in key social areas and have emerged as pockets of under-development, thereby posing a challenge to ensure balanced regional development.

Consumer Protection Bill

Syllabus: Government Policies and Interventions For Development In Various Sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

In News

The Consumer Protection Bill will become law once adopted by the Rajya Sabha and will replace the **Consumer Protection Act, 1986**. The legislation had not been amended for 32 years and needs changes to strengthen the consumer rights.

Provisions of the Bill

- **Overall Provisions:** The Consumer Protection Bill provides for recall of faulty products, allows buyers to seek compensation for defective items or deficiency in services and prescribes penalties for manufacturing or selling adulterated items.
- **Jurisdiction clause:** The bill also provides for consumers to file complaints with the Consumer Commissions at the place of residence or work and not from where he purchased product or availed a service, which is the present norm.
- **Constitution of CCPA:** The bill also proposes setting up of a Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA), which will have the power to take *suo moto* cognizance of offence or malpractice and act on consumer complaints to act against the violators. It will also have the power to file **class action complaints** before the consumer disputes redressal commissions in case a large number of people are impacted.
- **Redressal forum:** The new measure provides for protection of consumers' interests and proposes to establish a **Consumer Disputes Redressal Commission** and forums at the district, state and national levels for adjudicating consumer complaints.
- **Consumer protection council:** Consumer Protection Councils will be set up at the district, state, and national level as advisory bodies.
- **Financial jurisdiction enlarged:** The financial jurisdiction of the District Consumers Courts has been increased *i.e.* they can deal with complaints involving **Rs. 1 crore** as against the **Rs. 20 lakh** earlier.
- **Celebrities and Manufacturer's liability:** The bill also has provisions for imposing fines on celebrities for endorsing false or misleading advertisements and penalties including jail term for manufacturers for committing the offence. Moreover, under the clause of product liability, a manufacturer will also be liable to give compensation for products with defects.
- **New technology and consumers:** It is also meant to protect those who use new technologies such as e-commerce and online shopping.

- **Penalties:** The penalty and jail term has been linked to impact of adulterated products on human health with a proposal for **seven years to life imprisonment** and at least **Rs 10 lakh fine** in case of death caused by any adulterated products.

Opposition To The Bill

- **Excessive power to the bureaucracy:** The Bill gives excessive power to the bureaucracy and should have sunset provisions under which the Bill can come to Parliament for amendments.
- **Against federalism:** The Bill has provisions that are against the federal structure as earlier the power to appoint the members of the District forum lied with the State government, which now have been usurped by the Central government.
- **Violation of separation of power:** The Bill empowers the Central government to appoint members to these Commissions. But the Bill does not specify that the Commissions will comprise a judicial member. If the Commissions were to have members only from the executive, the principal of separation of powers may be violated.
- **Lack of clarity over the function:** The State and National Consumer Protection Councils are headed by Ministers in-charge of Consumer Affairs. The Bill does not specify whom the Councils will advise. If the Councils advise the government, it is unclear in what capacity such advice will be given.

Table 2: Comparison of the Consumer Protection Act, 1986 with the Consumer Protection Bill, 2018

Provision	1986 Act	2018 Bill
Ambit of law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All goods and services for consideration. Free and personal services are excluded. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All goods and services, including telecom and housing construction, and all modes of transactions (online, teleshopping, etc.) for consideration. Free and personal services are excluded.
Unfair trade practices*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Includes six types of such practices, like false representation, misleading advertisements. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adds three types of practices to the list, namely: (i) failure to issue a bill or receipt; (ii) refusal to accept a good returned within 30 days; and (iii) disclosure of personal information given in confidence, unless required by law or in public interest. Contests/ lotteries may be notified as not falling under the ambit of unfair trade practices.
Product liability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Claim for product liability can be made against manufacturer, service provider, and seller. Compensation can be obtained by proving one of the several specified conditions in the Bill.
Unfair contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defined as contracts that cause significant change in consumer rights. Lists six contract terms which may be held as unfair.
Central Protection Councils (CPCs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CPCs promote and protect the rights of consumers. CPCs established at the district, state, and national level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes CPCs advisory bodies for promotion and protection of consumer rights. Establishes CPCs at the district, state and national level.
Regulator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) to promote, protect, and enforce the rights of consumers as a class. CCPA may: (i) issue safety notices; (ii) pass orders to recall goods, prevent unfair practices, and reimburse purchase price paid; and (iii) impose penalties for false and misleading advertisements.
Pecuniary jurisdiction of Commissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District: Up to Rs 20 lakh. State: Between Rs 20 lakh and up to Rs one crore. National: Above Rs one crore. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District: Up to Rs one crore. State: Between Rs one crore and up to Rs 10 crore. National: Above Rs 10 crore.
Composition of Commissions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District: Headed by current or former District Judge and two members. State: Headed by a current or former High Court Judge and at least two members. National: Headed by a current or former Supreme Court Judge and at least four members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District: Headed by a President and at least two members. State: Headed by a President and at least four members. National: Headed by a President and at least four members.
Appointment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selection Committee (comprising a judicial member and other officials) will recommend members on the Commissions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No provision for Selection Committee. Central government will appoint through notification.
Alternate dispute redressal mechanism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mediation cells will be attached to the District, State, and National Commissions.
Penalties	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a person does not comply with orders of the Commissions, he may face imprisonment between one month and three years or fine between Rs 2,000 to Rs 10,000, or both. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If a person does not comply with orders of the Commissions, he may face imprisonment up to three years, or a fine not less than Rs 25,000 extendable to Rs one lakh, or both.
E-commerce	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Defines direct selling, e-commerce and electronic service provider. The central government may prescribe rules for preventing unfair trade practices in e-commerce and direct selling.

States' Startup Ranking 2018

Syllabus: Government Policies and Interventions For Development In Various Sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

In News

- The **Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP)** has announced results of the first ever States' Start-up Ranking 2018. DIPP began this exercise from January, 2016.
- The key objective of the exercise was to encourage States and Union Territories to **take proactive steps towards capacity development, strengthening the Start-up ecosystems in the states and to further the spirit of cooperative federalism.**
- Awareness workshops in all States, knowledge workshops in leading incubators, pairing of States for intensive mentoring, international exposure visits to US and Israel and intensive engagement between the States with Start-up India team and video conferencing have helped many States initiate effective measures to support Start-ups.
- States have been identified as leaders across various categories such as **Start-up policy leaders, incubation hubs, seeding innovation, scaling innovation, regulatory change champions, procurement leaders, communication champions, North-Eastern leader, and hill state leader.**
- On the basis of performance in these categories, the States have been recognised as the Best Performer, Top Performers, Leaders, Aspiring Leaders, Emerging States and Beginners.
- The methodology has been aimed at creating a healthy competition among States to further learn, share and adopt good practices.

Rankings

- Best Performer: Gujarat
- Top Performers: Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, and Rajasthan
- Leaders: Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Telangana
- Aspiring Leaders: Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal
- Emerging States: Assam, Delhi, Goa, Jammu & Kashmir, Maharashtra, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand
- Beginners: Chandigarh, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Puducherry, Sikkim, and Tripura
- These results are as much a recognition of the leading states as they are a celebration of efforts made by all the states for helping innovation and entrepreneurship across the length and breadth of the country.

Witness Protection Scheme

Syllabus: Important aspects of governance

In News

- The Supreme Court has approved the Centre's draft witness protection scheme and directed all states and union territories to implement it until Parliament passes a legislation. It shall be a law under **Article 141/142 of the Constitution.**
- This ruling comes in the context of a number of cases of fatal attacks suffered by witnesses in the past. The top court was earlier hearing a petition seeking protection of witnesses in rape cases involving religious leader Asaram, when the matter of a draft scheme had cropped up.

- The objective of this Scheme is to ensure that the **investigation, prosecution and trial of criminal offences is not prejudiced** because witnesses are intimidated or frightened to give evidence without protection from violent or other criminal recrimination.
- The specific provisions for witness protection are already there in the National Investigation Agency (**NIA**) Act.

Arguments Put Forward By SC

- **Serious perils:** Court recognized that the right to testify in courts in a free and fair manner without any pressure and threat whatsoever is under serious attack today. If one is unable to testify in courts due to threats or other pressures, then it is a clear violation of **Article 21** of the Constitution.
- **Part of Right To Life:** The court held that the right to life guaranteed to the people of this country also includes in its fold the right to live in a society, which is free from crime and fear, and the right of witnesses to testify in courts without fear or pressure.
- The present legal system takes witnesses completely for granted. They are summoned to court regardless of their financial and personal conditions and are not even suitably remunerated for the loss of time and the expenditure towards conveyance etc.
- The SC bench also noted that one of the main reasons for witnesses to turn hostile is that they are not accorded appropriate protection by the State.

Provisions

- The draft witness protection scheme provides for protection based on the level of threat perception, for a specific duration, subject to review.
- The scheme, formulated by the Union Home Ministry, assigns **three categories of threat perception**:
 - (i) threat to life of witness or family members, during or after investigation or trial;
 - (ii) threat to safety, reputation or property of the witness or family members; and
 - (iii) a moderate threat extending to harassment or intimidation of the witness or family members.
- These witnesses can file an application for protection with a **Competent Authority** which comprises the district and sessions judge, the district police chief, and district prosecution chief.
- On receiving the application, the authority will file a **Threat Analysis Report** from the ACP/DCP in charge of the police station, to gauge the presence and extent of the threat, and decide the types of protection that can be provided.
- Depending upon the urgency in the matter owing to imminent threat, the Competent Authority can pass orders for interim protection of the witness or his family members during the pendency of the application.
- The Authority will be required to dispose an application seeking protection **within five days** from the date of receipt of the Threat Analysis Report.
- The Witness Protection Order passed by the Competent Authority shall be implemented by the **Witness Protection Cell** of the state or Union Territory. It also puts the overall responsibility for implementing the order on the head of the police of the state and Union Territory. If the order is for change of identity or relocation, it shall be implemented by the Home department concerned.
- There shall be a Fund, namely, the **Witness Protection Fund** from which the expenses incurred during the implementation shall be met.

- The protection measures ensure that the witness is not exposed to any confrontation with the accused and also provides for close-proximity protection.
- The measures also include monitoring of phone calls, e-mails, installation of CCTV cameras in their houses, concealment of their identities and relocation to a new place.
- In case the witness has lodged a false complaint, the State Legal Service Authority can initiate proceedings for recovery of the expenditure incurred from the Witness Protection Fund.
- In case the witness or the police authorities are aggrieved by the decisions of the Competent Authority, a review application may be filed within 30 days of passing of the orders by the Competent Authority.
- The ability of a witness to give testimony in a judicial setting or to cooperate with law enforcement and investigations without fear of intimidation or reprisal is of utmost importance and the scheme will bolster the state's efforts to uphold the rule of law.

Final Analysis

- In its minutiae the scheme appears workable, but its efficacy will be confirmed only with the passage of time. The scheme is to be funded by budgetary support from State governments and donations. This is at variance with the Law Commission's recommendation in 2006 that the Centre and the States share the cost equally.
- The basic features such as in camera trial, proximate physical protection and anonymising of testimony and references to witnesses in the records are not difficult to implement. The real test will be the advanced forms of identity protection: giving witnesses a new identity, address and even parentage with matching documents. All this needs to be done without undermining their professional and property rights and educational qualifications.
- The introduction of the scheme marks a leap forward. Until now, there have been *ad hoc* steps such as those outlined for concealing the identity of witnesses in anti-terrorism and child-centric laws. A few dedicated courtrooms for vulnerable witnesses, mostly child victims, are also functional. However, expanding such facilities and implementing a comprehensive and credible witness protection programme will pose logistical and financial challenges. Moreover, the witness protection scheme must scale beyond high-profile cases and there is also a need to that the states must implement Supreme Court guidelines on police reforms.
- But at the same time the formalization of a witness protection scheme is a landmark moment with the potential to improve India's low conviction rates and could help strengthen India's tottering criminal justice system.

Social Justice

Draft National Child Protection Policy

Syllabus: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

In News

- The **Ministry of Women and Child Development** has developed the Draft National Child Protection Policy and placed it on its website and invited comments from various stakeholders.
- This will be the **first policy dedicated to the protection of children**, an area that until now was only a part of the broader National Child Policy, 2013.

- In the wake of sexual abuse cases of more than 30 girls in a shelter home in Muzzafarpur, the Supreme Court had asked the Centre to frame a national policy on protection of children.
- India is a young nation, with a **child population of more than 472 million** and protection of this 40% of the young population is **not only a matter of their human rights but also an investment towards building a robust nation**.
- The Constitution of India recognizes children as equal right holders and grants highest priority for their protection and well-being.
- India is also a **signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** and accordingly has a strong legal framework to protect children which include the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act 2015 and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act 2012.

Provisions of Draft Policy

- The policy **will apply to all institutions and organisations** (including corporate and media houses), **government or private sector**.
- All organisations must have a code of conduct based on **zero tolerance of child abuse and exploitation**. It requires organisations to lay down that employees don't use language or behaviour that is inappropriate, harassing, abusive, sexually provocative, demeaning or culturally inappropriate.
- Institutions should also designate a staff member to ensure that procedures are in place to ensure the protection of children as well as to report any abuse.
- Any individual who suspects physical, sexual or emotional abuse must report it to the helpline number 1098, police or a child welfare committee.
- The document also comprises a list of behaviours towards children that are punishable by law, including the POCSO and JJ Acts.
- Organisations must establish and strengthen monitoring mechanisms to ensure that industry/subsidiaries are not using child labour in any form.
- Institutions and organizations must ensure stringent background check (including police verification) of all employees - regular or contractual; volunteers and others who may come in contact with children.
- Institutions and organizations must train all employees on child rights, provisions of POCSO Act, JJ Act and other legislations for children and ensure that corporal punishment, bullying and any other form of abuse is prevented.
- Crèches/ mobile crèches for employee's children including those on daily wages/contractual basis if the number of employees is fifty or above otherwise appropriate space and facility for baby care to be provided for mothers with infants

Missing Elements

- Unlike the National Child Policy, 2013, the latest document doesn't talk about children who may need additional special protection measures: including those affected by migration, communal or sectarian violence, children forced into begging or in conflict with the law, and those infected with HIV/AIDS.
- The document needs to define what child protection is, as well as what it means by institutions or organisations.
- While it talks about organisations laying down a code of conduct, it doesn't explain what exactly is acceptable behaviour, such as conduct of teachers in schools.

Way Ahead

- The norms should be designed in such a way that organisations can customise their policies according to the nature of their work, thereby, giving them a sense of ownership on safeguarding children's rights.
- A policy has four aspects — **creating awareness, prevention, reporting and responding**. This document needs to go into all these aspects, especially a reporting structure involving various nodal bodies and a monitoring mechanism for implementation of the guidelines.
- All children deserve a happy childhood and the opportunity to lead a dignified life safe from violence, exploitation, neglect, deprivation and discrimination and this policy will go a long way in creating such an ecosystem.

Guidelines For Setting Up Of Crèches At Workplaces

Syllabus: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections

In News

- The Centre has prepared the guidelines for setting up of crèches at workplaces, which prescribe trained personnel to man the facility as well as infrastructure requirements and safety norms.
- In March this year, Parliament passed the **Maternity Benefit Amendment Act, 2017**, enhancing paid maternity leave from a period of 12 weeks to 26 weeks. The law is applicable to **all institutions with 10 or more employees**. It also makes it **mandatory for every organisation with 50 or more employees to have a crèche**.

Guidelines

- The guidelines recommend that a **crèche be either at the workplace or within 500 metres of it**. Alternatively, it could also be in the beneficiaries' neighbourhood.
- The facility should be **open for 8 to 10 hours** and if the employees have a shift system, then the crèche should also be run accordingly.
- A crèche must have a **minimum space of 10 to 12 sq ft per child** to ensure that she or he can play, rest and learn. There should be no unsafe places such as open drains, pits, garbage bins near the centre.
- The crèches should have at least **one guard**, who should have undergone police verification. There should also be at least **one supervisor** per crèche and a **trained worker** for every 10 children under three years of age or for every 20 children above the age of three, along with a helper. The crèche staff should be **paid at least minimum wages**.
- It also recommends that no outsiders such as plumbers, drivers, electricians be allowed inside the crèche when children are present.
- A **crèche monitoring committee** with representations from among crèche workers, parents and administration should be formed. Further, there should also be a **grievance redressal committee** for inquiring into instances of sexual abuse.
- The guidelines are **not mandatory but are a yardstick for NGOs and organisations for setting up of creches**.

Global Gender Gap Report 2018

In News

- The World Economic Forum has released the Global Gender Gap Report 2018. It has been **published annually since 2006 by the WEF.**
- The report benchmarks 149 countries on their progress towards gender parity across four thematic dimensions: **Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, and Political Empowerment.**

Global Findings

- The **world has closed 68 per cent of its gender gap** and at the current rate of change, it will take 108 years to close the overall gender gap and 202 years to bring about parity in the workplace.
- Despite the global gender gap narrowing slightly in 2018, **proportionately fewer women than men are participating in the labour force or in political life.**
- Overall, the economic gender gap narrowed in 2018; however, access to health and education, and political empowerment suffered reversals.
- Women are under-represented in growing areas of employment that require **STEM** (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) skills and knowledge.
- Infrastructure needed to help women enter or re-enter the workforce – such as childcare and eldercare – is under-developed and unpaid work remains primarily the responsibility of women.
- The corollary is that the substantial investments made by many economies to close the education gap are failing to generate optimal returns in the form of growth.
- The global list was **topped by Iceland having closed more than 85.8 per cent of its overall gender gap.** Iceland holds the top spot in the index for the 10th consecutive year.
- **Nordic countries Norway (2nd, 83.5 per cent), Sweden (3rd, 82.2 per cent), and Finland (4th, 82.1 per cent) dominated the top slots.**
- Other countries in the top-10 include Nicaragua (5th, 80.9 per cent), Rwanda (6th, 80.4 per cent), New Zealand (7th, 80.1 per cent), the Philippines (8th, 79.9 per cent), Ireland (9th, 79.6 per cent) and Namibia (10th, 78.9 per cent).
- **South Asia was the second-lowest ranking region in the index**, with only 65 per cent of its gender gap now closed. However, it is worth noting that, from a low base, South Asia has made the fastest progress on closing its gender gap of any world region over the past decade.

Indian Findings

- India has been **ranked 108th** in the index, same as 2017. It maintains a stable ranking this year, but its gap is directionally larger this year, with a **33 per cent gap yet to be bridged.**
- India **continues to rank third-lowest in the world on health and survival**, remaining the world's least-improved country on this sub index over the past decade. In fact, India actually widens the gender gap on this sub index this year.
- Interestingly, India **has the second-largest artificial intelligence (AI) workforce but one of the largest AI gender gaps**, with only 22 per cent of roles filled by women. It ranks 142nd out of 149 countries in the economic opportunity and participation subindex.
- However, on the positive side, India has slightly improved in WEF's wage equality for similar work indicator, where it stood at 72nd place. The country has also **closed its tertiary education**

enrolment gap for the first time in 2018 and has managed to keep its primary and secondary gaps closed for the third year running.

- India needs to make improvements across the board, from women's participation to getting more women into senior and professional roles.

Way Ahead

- Gender parity is fundamental to whether and how economies and societies thrive. Ensuring the full development and appropriate deployment of half of the world's total talent pool has a vast bearing on the growth, competitiveness and future-readiness of economies and businesses worldwide.
- The economies that will succeed in the fourth industrial revolution will be those that are best able to harness all their available talent.
- Proactive measures that **support gender parity and social inclusion and address historical imbalances** are therefore essential for the health of the global economy as well as for the good of society as a whole.

Reasons for Gender Pay Gap in India:

1. Occupational segregation:

- Preference is given to male workers while recruiting or promoting to senior roles.
- The rate of female participation in the paid labour market is generally low, and is primarily concentrated in rural areas in the agricultural sector.
- Women's participation is also higher in light industries and the unorganized sector, where the wages are usually lower.

2. Cultural barriers:

- Women are not promoted to seek gainful employment outside their home.
- Due to role stereotyping, childcare, cooking etc. is viewed primarily as a women's job.
- It leads to interrupted careers of women (career-breaks women take for certain personal and societal reasons)

3. Education and training:

- Biased socialisation processes do not encourage women to pursue higher education or to upgrade their skills.
- The literacy rate for women in India is far lower than the rate for men, and it has been observed that many girls drop out of school and fail to fully complete their education.

- 4. Unpaid work:** According to the Human Development Report 1995, women spend about two-thirds of their working time on unpaid work, while men spend only one-fourth of their time towards unpaid labour.

Way Forward

- Introduction of women friendly policies in organisations on voluntary basis can help in improving the situation. E.g. - Very recently, Tata Sons announced a seven months' maternity leave for its women with an extension of up to 18 months.
- Leadership intent to engage women, especially returning women, is crucial. This is 'inclusion in action'.
- Training the hiring team on how to assess women on breaks, how to identify potential and to match the same with the right job is essential.

- Having a clear strategy in place, as well as policies that direct and guide are also critical. But, most important is the realisation that women are a crucial talent pool that needs to be engaged at all life-stages.
- It is also the responsibility of women to stay up-to-date of these changes, and upskill themselves constantly, especially when they need to take career breaks. Women must identify a re-entry path. It could be through an internship (there are many such internships being offered – primary among them being the Tata SCIP programme) or through a second-career programme of a company.

J&K Becomes First State to Criminalise ‘Sextortion’ by Public Servants

Syllabus: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections

In News

- The administration led by the Governor in J&K has amended two state laws to **introduce a fresh offence called sextortion**, making sexual exploitation of women by people in positions of authority, having a fiduciary relationship or public servants a criminal offence.
- With the approval of amendments to **Jammu and Kashmir Prevention of Corruption Act and Ranbir Penal Code and Evidence Act**, J&K would **become the first state in the country to have an explicit law banning sexual exploitation of women**.
- The two new Bills — Prevention of Corruption (Amendment) Bill, 2018, and Jammu and Kashmir Criminal Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2018 — were approved by the State Administrative Council (SAC) led by Governor Satya Pal Malik.
- The administration has passed these amendments in the wake of a recent order that the Jammu and Kashmir High Court passed earlier this year in October. In its order, the court directed the administration to look into the possibility of introducing new laws or amendments to existing laws to criminalise “sextortion”.
- The court’s rationale lay in the belief that sextortion lies at the intersection of sex and extortion under the overarching ambit of corruption. Instead of money, sex is the currency of the bribe. In other words, sextortion is nothing but an institutionalised system of blatant abuse of power.
- The underlying idea is the element of quid pro quo where the perpetrator demands and accepts the sexual favour in exchange for a benefit that he is empowered to withhold or confer. The imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim allows the perpetrator to exert psychological pressure, which most significantly is not very different from that of monetary corruption
- As per the amendments, any person in a position of authority or in a fiduciary relationship, or a public servant who abuses such position or fiduciary relationship to employ physical or non-physical form of coercion to extort, request or demand sexual favours from any woman in exchange for some benefits or favours that such person is empowered to grant or withhold shall be guilty of offence of sextortion.
- Moreover, the law makes it abundantly clear that **it shall be no defence that the sexual benefit was derived with the consent of the victim**.
- Punishment for the offences ranges from three to five years of rigorous imprisonment with a fine. Also, these amendments clearly state that the offence is **non-bailable and not compoundable**.

No Religious Minority Tag To Lingayat/Veerashaiva Community

Syllabus: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections

Background

- The Union government has **rejected the recommendation of the State government to grant religious minority status to Lingayat and Veerashaiva communities**. The centre reiterated its earlier stand that these communities are part of the Hindu religion ever since 1871 census and do not form another religion of their own. Rationale for rejection of the demand:
- Other justification:** If Lingayats/Veerashaivas were to be treated as a separate religion by providing separate code other than Hindu, all members of the Scheduled Caste (SC) professing the said religion would lose their status as SC along with the consequential benefits available to them.
- Lingayats and Veerashaivas have been demanding status of a separate religion for a long time. The movement for a separate religion tag, which was started as far back as 1942, was resurrected in 2017. In August 2017, through a massive rally in Bidar, the Lingayats demanded a minority status for their community similar to Sikhism or Buddhism as they believe they are distinct from Hindu religion.
- In December 2017, a seven-member expert committee under **Nagmohan Das** was formed to study five separate demands, three of which were for a separate minority religion status for Lingayats.
- In January 2018, the committee recommended 'religious minority tag' for Lingayats. It concluded that Lingayat religion is different from Hindu religion.
- Post which, in March, 2018 the Karnataka state cabinet decided to recommend to the centre grant of religious minority tag for Lingayat and Veerashaiva community.

Lingayats and Veershaivas

- Lingayats are followers of 12th-century social reformer **Basavanna** and his vachana (verses) philosophy while Veerashaivas are a **sub-sect of Lingayats who preceded Basavanna**.
- It was Basavanna and his contemporary Sharanas who launched a very strong spiritual, social and religious rebellion against **Brahminical hegemony**.
 - Sharanas rejected the Vedas, Shastras, Smritis and Upanishads.
 - They denounced temples and idol-worship.
 - They rejected discrimination based on Caste and Gender.

<p>17% Estimated Veerashaiva-Lingayat population in state. Veerashaivas make up about 3%, it's believed</p>	
LINGAYAT	VEERASHAIVA
Different from Hindu religion. Worship one god. Oppose Vedic rituals like Homa. No caste system. Do not believe in rebirth. Started by Basavanna	Part of Hindu religion. Worship mainly Shiva. Believe in rebirth. Most of the sects of Veerashaivas follow Basavanna's philosophy

- In order to take the social movement closer to the people, Basavanna and all the other Sharanas voiced their concerns in simple Kannada vachanas so that even lay people could comprehend them.
- Veerashaivas worship Lord Shiva**, the one mentioned in Hindu mythology; but the Shiva that Basavanna referred to in his vachanas (verses) is not the Hindu god Shiva but the ishtalinga (formless God), which people of the community wear around their neck.
- Veerashaivism has its roots in the Vedas and Agamas**, and they do not worship any god other than Shiva. They accept Vedic texts, caste and gender discrimination. The sub-sect can be found spread across states of Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana.

A Note On Minorities In India

- The Constitution of India does not define the word 'minority'. However, Articles 29 and 30 of the constitution of India stand guarantee to the interest and protection of minorities in India.
- Article 29 states "Any Section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof, having a distinct language, script or culture of its own, shall have the right to conserve the same".

- Article 30 provides for the right of the minorities “based on religion or language, to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice”.
- By combining these two articles together, it can be inferred that the Indian constitution safeguards the interests of three different categories of minorities, based on language, religion and culture.
- The communities notified as minority communities by the Government of India, are Sikhs, Muslims, Christians, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, and Jains.

Transgender Rights Bill

Syllabus: Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections

In News

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2016, which **aims at defining the transgender people and prohibiting discrimination against them**, has been passed with 27 amendments in the Lok Sabha.

Provisions of the Bill

- The passed bill removes the reference to a transgender person as one who is neither wholly female or male; a combination of female and male; neither female nor male; or whose sense of gender does not match the gender assigned at birth.
- It now states that a transgender person is one whose gender does not match the gender assigned at birth. It includes trans-men and trans-women, persons with intersex variations, and gender-queers. It also includes persons having socio-cultural identities as kinnar, hijra, aravani, and jogta
- It defines a person with intersex variations as a person who at birth shows variations in his or her primary sexual characteristics, external genitalia, chromosomes, or hormones from normative standard of male or female body.
- A transgender person **may make an application to the District Magistrate for a certificate of identity**, indicating the gender as ‘transgender’. After the issue of a certificate of identity, a transgender person may apply for a revised certificate only if the individual undergoes surgery to change their gender either as a male or a female.
- It removes the earlier threshold of 100 or more people and states that **every establishment must designate a complaint officer**.
- It prohibits any person or establishment from discriminating against a transgender person, including unfair treatment or denial of service.
- The government will cover medical expenses by an insurance scheme for sex reassignment surgery, hormonal therapy, laser therapy or any other health issues of transgender persons.
- A **National Council for Transgender persons** will be set up to advise the central government on policies and legislation related to transgender persons. It will also be empowered to redress the grievances of transgender persons.

Grievances

- Transgender people will be subject to certification by a District Screening Committee to be acknowledged as transgender, and those wishing to identify as either a man or a woman will need to go through gender affirmation surgery (popularly known as sex reassignment surgery, or SRS). This completely violates the Supreme Court judgment which states that the only thing needed to acknowledge a person’s gender identity is their word for it.

- Furthermore, the presence of screening committees and the need for medical certification open up a space where a transgender person's very identity is subject to doubt until approved by external gatekeepers, which is inherently problematic. It will also inevitably lead to more discrimination and harassment by people empowered to screen and scrutinise trans people's lives.
- The bill both infantilises trans people and places them in harm's way by insisting that **when a parent or immediate family member is unable to take care of a transgender** – no age qualification is provided in the law – **they should be sent to a rehabilitation centre**. In a country where cisgender people (people who identify with the same gender identity they were assigned at birth) are free to live where they please, this is a brazen way to **control the movements of trans people and make them subjects of care which they may not want or need**.
- It also **criminalises whoever compels or entices a transgender person to indulge in the act of begging**. It betrays an ignorance of the way certain transgender communities (like hijras and kinnars) are structured, functioning on traditional systems such as badhai and mangti. This can be counterproductive since transgender people do not have access to employment in the way that other Indians do.
- Moreover, the bill is **problematically silent on the the matter of reservation** for transpersons in jobs and education sector.
- It **does not mention any punishments for rape or sexual assault** of transpersons as according to Sections 375 and 376 of the Indian Penal Code, rape is only when a man forcefully enters a woman. In terms of protection, the Bill offers a measly six months to two years imprisonment for those found guilty of atrocities against transpersons as mentioned in the Bill.

Partners' Forum

Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

In News

- **Ministry of Health** in association with the **Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (PMNCH)**, organised a two-day international conference – **Partners' Forum** in New Delhi, bringing together about 1500 participants from across 85 countries.
- This is the 4th in a series of global high-level multi-country, multi-stakeholder events aimed at sustaining global momentum for issues related to **health of women, children and adolescents**.
- The invited countries have been selected from across all regions and income levels and include countries that are currently chairing key global and regional bodies (e.g. G7, G20, BRICS, etc.).

Partners' Forum

- Partners' Forum is a global health partnership, launched in September 2005, to accelerate efforts to reduce child and maternal mortality, improve adolescent, child, newborn and maternal health.
- This partnership is an alliance of more than 1,000 plus members, across 10 constituencies in 92 countries: academic, research and teaching institutions; donors and foundations; health care professionals; multilateral agencies; non-governmental organizations; partner countries; global financing mechanisms and the private sector.
- It aims to unite the partners around common strategies so that every woman, child and adolescent – no matter where they live – can **survive, thrive and transform the world**.

- PMNCH's mission is to support the global health community to work successfully towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly the health related SDGs as articulated in the Strategy for Women's Children's and Adolescents' Health in support of **Every Woman Every Child (EWEC) movement**.
- A big focus of the forum will be to share stories of how countries are successfully collaborating across sectors and stakeholders to fast-track improvements.
- A set of 12 case studies will be launched at the event showcasing the power of partnership, cross-sectoral action, accountability and political leadership across partner countries.
- One such success story chosen from India is **Mission Indradhanush**, an unprecedented collaboration between India's Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and 11 other ministries to increase immunization coverage among children and pregnant women to 90% by 2020.

International Universal Health Coverage (UHC) Day

Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

In News

- 2014 onwards **Universal Health Coverage Coalition** began to celebrate 12 Dec' as UHC Day, to commemorate the UN's landmark decision and hold leaders accountable to their promise of health for all.
- In **2017**, United Nations proclaimed 12 December as International Universal Health Coverage Day (UHC Day), making it **an official UN-designated day**.
- The day aims to mobilize diverse stakeholders to call for stronger, more equitable health systems to achieve universal health coverage, leaving no one behind. It has become the annual rallying point for the growing global movement for health for all.
- Every year on this day people across the world raise their voices to share stories of millions of people still waiting for health, call on leaders to make bigger and smarter investments in health and remind the world that health for all is imperative for the world we want.

Why Universal Health Coverage?

- **Health is a human right, not a privilege.** Access to quality health services should never depend on race, gender, age, ability, wealth or citizenship. Universal health coverage leaves no one behind.
- No one should go bankrupt when they get sick. Everyone should be able to get the health care they need without being pushed into poverty or giving up other life necessities to pay for it.
- **Good health transforms societies** and when people are healthy, families, communities and economies can reach their full potential.
- Achieving UHC will accelerate efforts to end extreme poverty, reduce burdens of infectious and non communicable diseases, promote economic growth and job creation, achieve gender equality and **realize all the Sustainable Development Goals**.

National Medical Devices Promotion Council

Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

In News

- To give a fillip to the medical device sector, which is a sunrise sector, a **National Medical Devices Promotion Council** will be set up under the **Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP)** in the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
- The Council will be headed by Secretary, DIPP. Apart from the concerned departments of Government of India, it will also have representatives from health care industry and quality control institutions.

About Medical Device Industry

- The Medical Devices Industry (MDI) plays a critical role in the healthcare ecosystem and is indispensable to achieve the goal of health for all citizens of the country.
- The medical devices industry in India is currently valued at \$5.2 billion and growing at 15.8 percent annually. India is among the top 20 global medical devices market and is poised to grow to **\$50 billion by 2025** led by a growing middle class, health insurance penetration and expansion of hospitals, leading to greater need for sophisticated medical devices and better healthcare.
- However, the **medical devices market is dominated by imported products, which comprise about 80 % of the market**. While there are around 800 medical device manufacturers in India, only 10 percent of them have a turnover in excess of Rs 50 crore, most of them are involved in manufacturing low-end products such as consumables and disposables, very few manufacture and export high-value implants and equipment.
- Whereas, in China local companies contribute around 70-80 percent, and even multinational companies have made the country as their manufacturing hub.
- As Indian manufacturing companies and startups move towards creating innovative products, the setting-up of the Council will spur domestic manufacturing in this sector.

Objectives

- It will act as a facilitating, promotional & developmental body for the Indian MDI.
- Hold periodic seminars, workshops and all related networking activities to garner views of the industry and understand best global practices in the sector.
- Render technical assistance to the agencies and departments concerned to simplify the approval processes involved in medical device industry promotion & development.
- Enable entry of emerging interventions and support certifications for manufacturers to reach levels of global trade norms and lead India to an export driven market in the sector.
- Drive a robust and dynamic Preferential Market Access (PMA) policy, by identifying the strengths of the Indian manufacturers and discouraging unfair trade practices in imports; while ensuring pro-active monitoring of public procurement notices across India to ensure compliance with PMA guidelines of DIPP and DoP.
- Undertake validation of Limited Liability Partnerships (LLPs) and other such entities within MDI sector, which add value to the industry strength in manufacturing to gain foothold for new entrants.
- It is hoped that similar to Pharmexcil (set up in 2004) that helped Indian pharmaceutical exports grow significantly, the Medical Devices Promotion Council will similarly help realise the vision for India to be among the **top 5 medical devices manufacturing hubs worldwide**.

Ujjwala Sanitary Napkins Initiative

In News

- The Ujjwala Sanitary Napkins initiative by three oil marketing companies – **IOCL, BPCL and HPCL** – was recently launched by Union Petroleum and Natural Gas Minister **in Odisha**.
- The **Central scheme** will be a counter to the Odisha government's Khushi scheme, in which sanitary napkins are provided free of cost to female students of government and government-aided schools in the state.
- As per the **National Family Health Survey (NFHS) report, the overall use of sanitary napkins in Odisha is 33.5 per cent**. Hence the initiative emphasizes on the need to make the use of sanitary napkins a mass movement.
- The three companies will set up **100 manufacturing units at the Common Service Centres (CSC)** covering 93 Blocks across 30 districts of Odisha. CSCs are facilities set up to deliver the Central government's e-services in rural and remote locations.
- The mission, which forms part of the CSR initiative of OMCs in Odisha, is **aimed to educate women on female hygiene and health, improve accessibility to low cost eco-friendly sanitary pads and boost rural employment and economy**.
- At least 10 Ujjwala beneficiary women will get employment at each CSC. Each facility will have a capacity to produce 1,200-2,000 pads per day and will have a sterilisation room to ensure that the napkins are sterilised before they are packed for use by rural women.
- The CSCs are also being provided with raw material, enough to make 45,000-50,000 pads. These napkins will be priced at ₹40 per pack, each containing eight pads. The pads will be made of virgin wood pulp sheet, non-woven white sheet and a gel sheet which are all biodegradable in nature and will leave minimal carbon footprint.

Oxytocin Ban Quashed By Delhi HC**In News**

- The Delhi High Court has quashed the government's decision to ban private companies from making and selling Oxytocin in the country, which had come into effect from July 1 this year.
- The Health Ministry had called for a ban on the private production of the drug to prevent its misuse in cattle and poultry which can cause infertility in dairy animals, its abuse in young girls to advance puberty, and to induce ripening in fruits and vegetables.
- To cater to domestic supplies, the Centre had appointed a public sector unit Karnataka Antibiotics & Pharmaceuticals Ltd (KAPL).

About Oxytocin

- Oxytocin is a hormone produced **by the hypothalamus and secreted by the pituitary gland** of mammals during sex, childbirth, lactation or social bonding. It also helps with male reproduction and is also called the **love hormone**.

- It is chemically synthesised and sold by pharmaceutical companies across the world in the form of an injection or a nasal solution.
- It is used as a life saving drug during childbirth because it can contract the uterus and induce delivery, stem postpartum bleeding, and promote the release of breast milk.

The Issues

- The government's move had gynaecologists raising an alarm on the possibility of hospital supplies of this critical drug being hit by the ban on private producers. They also cautioned against depending on a single company, albeit a PSU, who had not made the product earlier.
- The court observed that the government's decision to allow only a single, state-run entity — with no prior experience in manufacturing Oxytocin — to make and sell the drug, was fraught with potential adverse consequences.
- The risk of such a consequence can be drastic as the scarcity of the drug, or even a restricted availability can cause **increase in maternal fatalities during childbirth**, impairing lives of thousands of innocent young mothers. It could also lead to **price hike** due to monopolistic tendencies.
- However, even if the ill-effects of oxytocin are real, a ban is not the answer. Oxytocin is simply too important to Indian women, 45,000 of whom die due to causes related to childbirth each year.
- So critical is its role in maternal health that the World Health Organization recommends it as the drug of choice in postpartum haemorrhage.
- Further, much is unknown about the ill-effects of oxytocin on cattle. There was no scientific basis, and insufficient data to support the conclusion that the drug's existing availability or manner of distribution posed a risk to human life.
- In a Lok Sabha answer in 2015, the National Dairy Research Institute was quoted as saying there was no evidence that oxytocin led to infertility. Further a 2014 study by researchers at the National Institute of Nutrition concluded that oxytocin content in buffalo milk did not alter with injections.

Global Nutrition Report (GNR) 2018

Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

In News

- The GNR for the year 2018 was released recently. GNR was conceived following the first **Nutrition for Growth Initiative Summit (N4G)** in 2013 as a mechanism for tracking the commitments made by 100 stakeholders spanning governments, aid donors, civil society, the UN and businesses.
- Malnutrition is a universal issue holding back development with unacceptable human consequences. Yet the opportunity to end malnutrition has never been greater. The **UN Decade of Action on Nutrition 2016–2025** and the Sustainable Development Goals (**SDGs**) provide global and national impetus to address malnutrition and expedite progress.
- The report collates existing data, presents new innovations in data and conducts novel data analysis, focusing on five areas: **the burden of malnutrition, emerging areas in need of focus, diets as a common cause of malnutrition in all its forms, financing of nutrition action, and global commitments.**
- Around the world, malnutrition has become a problem that **costs a staggering \$3.5 trillion** per year, with *obesity alone costing \$500 billion per year.*

Highlights Of The ReportAlarming Figures

- The burden of malnutrition across the world remains unacceptably high and progress unacceptably slow. Malnutrition is responsible for more ill health than any other cause.
- Children under five years of age face multiple burdens: **150.8 million are stunted, 50.5 million are wasted and 38.3 million are overweight**. Meanwhile 20 million babies are born of low birth weight each year.
- Overweight and obesity among adults are at record levels with **38.9% of adults overweight or obese**, stretching from Africa to North America, and increasing among adolescents.
- **Women have a higher burden than men when it comes to certain forms of malnutrition**. One third of all women of reproductive age have anaemia and women have a higher prevalence of obesity than men. Millions of women are still underweight.
- Several countries are on course to meet at least one of the globally adopted nutrition targets set for 2025, but most are off-track and none are making progress on the full suite of targets.
- Of the 141 countries with consistent data on three forms of malnutrition – childhood stunting, anaemia in women of reproductive age and overweight among women – 88% (124 countries) experience a high level of at least two types of malnutrition, with 29% (41 countries) experiencing high levels of all three.

Ray Of Hope

- Yet significant steps are being made to address malnutrition. Globally, stunting among children has declined and there has been a slight decrease in underweight women.
- Many countries are set to achieve at least one of the targets set by the global community to track progress on nutritional status to 2025.
- There has been an increase in the number and breadth of national nutrition policies and nutrition targets, with the outstanding challenge being the financing and action to deliver them.
- Donors have met the funding commitment made at the Nutrition for Growth Summit in 2013, but globally there is still a significant financing gap.
- The level of knowledge on what it takes to deliver results has never been greater. The global community and national stakeholders have never been better placed to deliver results, with more governance, policies, actions, plans and targets.
- Advances in data are enabling the progress in understanding the nature of the burden of malnutrition in all its forms and its causes and therefore guide and inspire action and improve the ability to track progress.

Indian Scenario

- The health, longevity and well-being of Indians has improved since Independence and the high levels of economic growth over the past two-and-half-decades have made more funds available to spend on the social sector. Yet, the reality is that **a third of the world's stunted children under five** — an estimated 46.6 million who have low height for age — live in India.
- Further, **a quarter of the children who display wasting** (low weight for height) also inhabit in India.
- In India, **two out of five children are stunted**, which is far higher than the global average of 21%.
- District-level data show high and very high levels of stunting mainly in central and northern India (more than 30% and 40%, respectively), but less than 20% in almost the entire south.

- This shows the **important role played by political commitment, administrative efficiency, literacy and women's empowerment in ensuring children's health.**
- Among the factors affecting the quantity and quality of nutrition are **maternal education, age at marriage, antenatal care, children's diet and household size.**

Way Ahead

- Break down silos between malnutrition in all its forms. The data shows that different forms of malnutrition coexist but are being tackled at different rates, vary between populations, and overlap with each other in various ways. Therefore, they **require integrated approaches and cohesive work to address them.**
- **Prioritise and invest in the data needed and capacity to use it.** Designing actions that result in impact is impossible without adequate knowledge of who is affected by malnutrition and why. Governments, international organisations, research organisations and academic institutions must continue this ongoing data revolution in nutrition.
- **Scale up financing for nutrition – diversify and innovate to build on past progress.** Without adequate and appropriate funds invested towards all forms of malnutrition, it is not possible to make progress.
- **Galvanise action on healthy diets** – engage countries all over to address this universal problem. Governments and business need to implement a holistic package of actions to ensure that food systems and food environments are delivering healthy diets that are affordable, accessible and desirable for all.
- **Make and deliver better commitments to end malnutrition in all its forms** – an ambitious, transformative approach will be required to meet global nutrition targets. Only commitments designed for impact that signatories consistently report on and deliver will be fit for purpose to end malnutrition in all its forms.

FSSAI Launches Campaign To Eliminate Trans Fats

Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

International Relations

In News

- The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has launched a new mass media campaign calling for the elimination of industrially produced trans fats in the food supply.
- It is a follow-up to an earlier campaign called **Eat Right**, which was launched in July 2018. As part of the campaign, edible oil industries took a pledge to reduce trans fat content by 2 % by 2022. Later, food companies also took a pledge to reformulate packaged foods with reduced levels of salt, sugar and saturated fat.
- Currently, the permitted levels of trans fats in vegetable oils and hydrogenated vegetable oils is 5 %, a percentage that **FSSAI wants to bring down to less than 2 % by 2022**, albeit in a phased manner.

Background

- Called **Heart Attack Rewind**, the 30 second public service announcement (PSA) - the first mass media campaign of its kind – will support FSSAI's global target of eliminating trans fats in India by the year 2022, a year ahead of the global target by the World Health Organization (WHO).

- In May 2018, WHO launched a comprehensive plan to eliminate industrially-produced trans fats from the global food supply by 2023. **REPLACE** provides a roadmap about how countries can remove and replace all trans fats from their food supplies with the intention to eradicate it from the globe.
- Since then, a lot of countries have made efforts to reduce the levels of trans fats and in some cases, have completely banned them.

About The Campaign

- The campaign will concentrate on the demand side (consumers), who in turn, will push the supply side (food manufacturers) to come up with various strategies in order to reduce and later replace trans fats.
- It warns citizens about the health hazards of consuming trans fat and offers strategies to avoid them through healthier alternatives.
- The messages are personalised, and urge people to check the labels before buying food so that they make informed choices.
- It will be broadcast in 17 languages for a period of four weeks on major digital platforms such as YouTube, Facebook, Hotstar, and Voot.
- Additionally, the campaign will also be placed on radio channels and outdoor hoardings in Delhi/NCR along with a corresponding social media campaign.

About Trans Fat

- Trans fats are made by **adding hydrogen to liquid vegetable oils to make them more solid, and to increase the shelf life of foods**. They are largely present in Vanaspati, margarine and bakery shortenings, and can be found in baked and fried foods.
- Since they are easy to use, inexpensive to produce, last a long time, and give foods a desirable taste and texture, they are still widely used despite their harmful effects being well-known.
- Trans fats raise bad (LDL) cholesterol levels and lower good (HDL) cholesterol levels. Eating trans fats increases the risk of developing heart disease and stroke. It's also associated with a higher risk of developing type 2 diabetes.
- Globally, trans fats intake leads to more than 500,000 deaths of people from cardiovascular disease every year.

Shiksha Setu App

Syllabus: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

In News

- Haryana Government has developed a mobile app called Shiksha Setu in order to streamline the education process and help students.
- The launch of this app would **bring transparency in the Department and college administration and enable better connectivity between students, parents, teachers and administration**.
- Attendance of students would be online and it could be updated within 15 days only and thereafter no change would be possible in it.
- Through this app, students and teachers would get instant updates of important notices, circulars and other programmes.

- Apart from this, students would also get instant information of assignments and notifications.
- The students can also pay their fee online through this app and college administration can also check whose fee is pending and how much fee has been collected.
- During admissions, the students would be able to check through the app the status of seats or course in every college in the state.
- Students would also be able to get all information of scholarships such as details of scholarships, eligibility conditions and details of applying students.
- Directions have been issued to Principals of all government colleges to inspire students and teachers in their respective colleges to download and use the app.