

eBक्रय launched

What is it?

To enable online auction by banks of attached assets transparently and cleanly for improved realisation of value, **eBक्रय**, a **common e-auction platform** has been launched by the Finance Ministry.

Features -

The platform is equipped with property search features and navigational links to all PSB e-auction sites, provides single-window access to information on properties up for e-auction as well as facility for comparison of similar properties, and also contains photographs and videos of uploaded properties.

Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System (PPRTS)

PPRTS has gone online since the start of the new year 2020.

Features of PPRTS -

- In order to enable applicants to track the status of the application, the **Election Commission** has launched a “**Political Parties Registration Tracking Management System (PPRTMS)**”.
- The salient feature in the PPRTMS is that the applicant, who is applying for party registration from 1st January, 2020 will be able to track the progress of his/her application and will get status update through SMS and e-mail.
- The status can be tracked through the Commission’s web portal.

About registration of political parties -

- Registration of political parties is governed by the provisions of **Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951**.
- An association seeking registration under the said Section has to submit an application to the Commission within a period of 30 days following the date of its formation, as per the guidelines prescribed by the Commission in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 324 of the Constitution of India and Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Island Development Agency meeting

The Union Home Minister has chaired the sixth meeting of the Island Development Agency. It was held to review the progress made towards the programme ‘Holistic Development of Islands’.

Holistic Development of Islands programme -

- For the first time in the country, under the guidance of IDA, an initiative of sustainable development in the identified Islands within scientifically-assessed carrying capacity has been taken-up.
- Development Plans with focus on creation of jobs for the islanders through tourism promotion as well as export of seafood and coconut-based products made in the Islands have been prepared and are being implemented in four islands of Andaman & Nicobar and five islands of Lakshadweep.
- In the second phase, suitable sites in 12 more islands of Andaman & Nicobar Islands and 5 islands in Lakshadweep have been covered.

About Island Development Agency -

- The Union Government constituted the Island Development Agency on 1st June, 2017 for the development of islands.
- It is chaired by the **Union Home Minister**.

- Members of the agency include Cabinet Secretary, Home Secretary, Secretary (Environment, Forests and Climate Change), Secretary (Tourism) and Secretary (Tribal Welfare).

Swachh Survekshan 2020

Indore and Jamshedpur have **topped** the cleanliness charts for two consecutive quarters among cities with over 10 lakh population and with 1 lakh to 10 lakh population respectively.

Kolkata remained at the **bottom** of the ranking of 49 major cities across both quarters as West Bengal did not participate in the nationwide exercise.

Details -

- **Union Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** has announced the results of the first and second quarters of the Swachh Survekshan 2020.
- **Indore**, which was at number one in the past three sanitation surveys, remained the top slot in the first two quarters of 2019.
- **Bhopal**, which came in second in the first quarter, was replaced by **Rajkot** in Gujarat in the second quarter.
- **Surat** was at number three in the first quarter, but **Navi Mumbai** made it to the third spot in the second quarter rankings.
- **New Delhi** fell from second position in the first quarter to sixth position in the second quarter and was replaced by **Chandrapur** in Maharashtra at second place.

Suicide data

Maharashtra has ranked first in the number of suicides reported in 2018. The **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** statistics revealed that a large number of people took the extreme step owing to illness and family problems.

Details -

- Tamil Nadu also contributed to 10.3% of the total suicides reported in the country.
- The **NCRB crime data for 2018** revealed that Maharashtra topped the country with 17,992 cases of suicides followed by Tamil Nadu (13,896), West Bengal (13,255) and Madhya Pradesh (11,775).
- **Maharashtra** reported the maximum of 231 cases of **government servants committing suicides** followed by Tamil Nadu with 173 cases.
- The data showed that 1,146 people working in private firms and 953 students were among those who committed suicide.
- **Gujarat** has topped in the highest number of **deaths in police custody** with 13 deaths; Tamil Nadu being the second highest with 12 deaths in police custody.

Indian Road Accident Database

The database has been launched by the government.

Details -

- It has been developed by the **Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M)**.
- It will be **implemented** by the **National Informatics Centre**.
- The project costs ₹258 crore and is being **supported by the World Bank**.
- The system will be first piloted in the six States with highest fatalities from road crashes — **Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh**.

PM Modi pays tribute to Savitribai Phule

Prime Minister has paid tributes to Savitribai Phule on her Jayanti.

About Savitribai Phule -

- Savitribai Phule was born in Naigaon, Maharashtra in 1831 and married activist and social-reformer Jyotirao Phule when she was nine years old.
- Both Jyotirao and Savitribai Phule went on to found **India's first school for girls called Bhide Wada in Pune in 1848.**
- Before this, she started a school with Jyotirao's cousin Saganbai in Maharwada in 1847.
- Her books of poems "**Kavya Phule**" and "**Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar**" were published in 1934 and 1982.

Finance Ministry unveils plans for Rs 102 lakh crore infra projects

Union Finance Ministry has outlined plans to invest more than Rs 102 lakh crore in infrastructure projects by 2024-25, with the Centre, the States and the private sector sharing the capital expenditure in a 39:39:22 formula.

Details -

- This will be a significant increase over the last six years, when the Centre and the States together spent Rs 51 lakh crore on infrastructure.
- A **task force** of senior bureaucrats, **chaired by Economic Affairs Secretary Atanu Chakraborty** had identified Rs 102 lakh crore worth of projects in 18 states as part of a National Infrastructure Pipeline.
- Another 3 lakh crore worth of projects are likely to be added soon as the idea is to not exclude any state.
- The plan calls for a ₹13.6 lakh crore investment in 2019-20, a big task considering that the 2018-19 investment in infrastructure by the Centre, the States and the private sector was only ₹10 lakh crore, a slight drop from the previous year's investment of ₹10.2 lakh crore.

Division of infrastructure investments -

- Almost a **quarter** of the capital expenditure is **going to the energy sector**, with ₹24.5 lakh crore expected to be invested in power, renewable energy, atomic energy and petroleum and natural gas. This is also the sector where the private sector has expressed the most interest.
- The other major focus areas are **roads** (19%) and **railways** (13%), **urban** (16%) and **rural** (8%) **infrastructure**, and **irrigation** (8%).
- **Social infrastructure**, including **health and education**, will **get 3% of the capital expenditure**, with **digital communication and industrial expenditure** each getting the same amount as well.
- **Agriculture and food processing infrastructure** will get **one per cent** of the planned capital expenditure.

FDI in Coal Mining

The Union Cabinet has approved an ordinance to amend two laws to ease mining rules, enabling foreign direct investment (FDI) in coal mining.

Details -

- The ordinance to amend **the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, and Coal Mines (Special Provisions) Act, 2015** has been approved.
- The "**end-use restrictions**" had been **done away** with, allowing "anyone to participate in the auction of coal blocks". The ordinance would strengthen the auction process of mines whose leases are expiring on March 31, 2020.

Significance -

- It would boost the ease of doing business and increase growth avenues for coal mining.
- Coal India would be strengthened and the government is aiming to achieve production of 1 billion tonnes of coal by 2023-2024.
- It is also expected that the successful strategic buyer may bring in new management/technology/ investment for the growth of the company and may use innovative methods for the development of the business operations of the company, which may generate more employment opportunities.

Northeast Gas Grid

The Union Cabinet has approved a ₹5,559 crore viability gap funding for the proposed northeast gas grid.

About Northeast Gas Grid -

- The 1,656-km North-East Natural Gas Pipeline Grid will connect Guwahati in Assam to major cities in the region such as Itanagar, Dimapur, Kohima, Imphal, Aizwal, Agartala, Shillong, Silchar, Gangtok, and Numaligarh.
- The pipeline will enable the supply of piped cooking gas to households and CNG to automobiles, besides fuel to industry.
- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved “**a viability gap funding of 60% of the project cost**”.
- The pipeline grid is to be implemented by the **Indradhanush Gas Grid (a Joint Venture of IOCL, ONGC, GAIL, OIL and NRL)**.

Purvodaya

Ministry of steel in partnership with CII and JPC is organising the launch of **Purvodaya-Accelerated Development of Eastern Region** through an Integrated Steel hub.

Details -

The objective of this hub would be to enable swift capacity addition and improve overall competitiveness of steel producers both in terms of cost and quality.

The Integrated Steel Hub would focus on 3 key elements -

- Capacity addition through easing the setup of greenfield steel plants.
- Development of steel clusters near integrated steel plants as well as demand centres
- Transformation of logistics and utilities infrastructure which would change the socio-economic landscape in the East.

Significance -

- Creation of an Eastern Hub would significantly contribute to Purvodaya by propelling socio-economic development in the Eastern region.
- Steel capacity addition in the hub would entail capital investments of more than \$70 billion and lead to an incremental GSDP of \$35 billion through steel alone.
- It will also lead to significant employment opportunities across the entire value chain, creating over 2.5 million jobs in the region.
- It will also spur the creation of world-class logistics and utilities infrastructure also spurring the development of other manufacturing industries across the region.
- This will be accompanied by social infrastructure in the form of cities, schools, hospitals, skilling centres etc.

Background -

- Eastern states of India (**Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, West Bengal and Northern Andhra Pradesh**) collectively hold over 80% of the country's **iron ore**, 100% of **coking coal** and significant portion of **chromite, bauxite and dolomite** reserves.

- There is a presence of major ports such as **Paradip, Haldia, Vizag, Kolkata** etc with over 30% of India's major port capacity, 3 major National Waterways as well as strong road, rail connectivity to most parts of the country.
- Despite these advantages, these states currently lag behind many other Indian states in terms of economic and development indicators such as GSDP per capita and Human Development Index (HDI).

Saksham

What is Saksham?

'Saksham' is an annual one-month long, people-centric fuel conservation **mega campaign of Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA)** under the aegis of Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas.

About PCRA -

- Petroleum Conservation Research Association (PCRA) is a **registered society** set up under the aegis of **Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas**, Government of India.
- As a **non-profit organisation**, PCRA is a national government agency engaged in promoting energy efficiency in various sectors of economy.
- PCRA aims at making oil conservation a national movement.
- As part of its mandate, PCRA is entrusted with the task of creating awareness amongst the masses about the importance, methods and benefits of conserving petroleum products & emission reduction.
- It **sponsors R&D activities for the development of fuel-efficient equipment/devices** and organises multi-media campaigns for creating mass awareness for the conservation of petroleum products.
- It functions as a **think Tank to the Government of India** for proposing policies and strategies on petroleum conservation and environment protection aimed at reducing excessive dependence on oil.

National Startup Advisory Council

The Central Government has notified the structure of the National Startup Advisory Council to advise the Government on measures needed to build a strong ecosystem for nurturing innovation and startups in the country to drive sustainable economic growth and generate large scale employment opportunities.

Structure -

- The National Startup Advisory Council **will be chaired by Minister for Commerce & Industry**.
- The Council will consist of the **non-official members, to be nominated by Central Government, from various categories** like founders of successful startups, veterans who have grown and scaled companies in India, persons capable of representing interests of investors into startups, persons capable of representing interests of incubators and accelerators and representatives of associations of stakeholders of startups and representatives of industry associations.
- **The term of the non-official members** of the Startup Advisory Council will be for **a period of two years**.

Significance -

- The Council will suggest measures to foster a culture of innovation amongst citizens and students in particular, promote innovation in all sectors of economy across the country, including semi-urban and rural areas.
- It will support creative and innovative ideas through incubation and research and development to transform them into valuable products, processes or solutions to improve productivity and efficiency and create an environment of absorption of innovation in industry.

- It will also suggest measures to facilitate public organisations to assimilate innovation with a view to improving public service delivery, promote creation, protection and commercialisation of intellectual property rights, make it easier to start, operate, grow and exit businesses.

Certificates of Competency for Seafarers

The Union Cabinet has given its approval for the Model Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for unilateral/bilateral recognition of Certificates, pursuant to **Regulation 1/10 of International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) for Seafarers, 1978.**

Significance -

- The unilateral MoU would **facilitate unilateral recognition by another country of the certificates issued by the Directorate General of Shipping to Indian seafarers**, without seeking similar recognition by India of the certificates issued by that country.
- Indian Seafarers, therefore, will be **eligible to be placed on ships under the flag of that country for employment**, thus leading to increased employment opportunities.
- The proposed bilateral MoU will enable India and another country with which such an MoU may be entered, **to mutually recognise maritime education and training, certificates of competency, endorsements, documentary evidence of training and medical fitness certificates.**
- The bilateral MoU would therefore, **make the seafarers of both the countries to be eligible for employment on ships of either party** based on the certificates so recognised.

State of the Forest Report

The Union Ministry for Environment, Forest and Climate Change has released the **biennial** “India State of Forest Report (ISFR)” recently.

Details -

- The report is published by the **Forest Survey of India.**
- It **started in the year 1987** with 16 such reports so far. ISFR 2019 is the 16th report in the series.
- The total forest and tree cover of the country is 80.73 million hectare which is 24.56 percent of the geographical area of the country.
- As compared to the assessment of 2017, there is an increase of 5,188 sq. km in the total forest and tree cover of the country.

Highlights of the report -

- Area-wise Madhya Pradesh has the largest forest cover in the country followed by Arunachal Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Maharashtra. In terms of forest cover as percentage of total geographical area, the top five States are Mizoram (85.41%), Arunachal Pradesh (79.63%), Meghalaya (76.33%), Manipur (75.46%) and Nagaland (75.31%).
- The total mangrove cover in the country is 4,975 sq km. An increase of 54 sq Km in mangrove cover has been observed as compared to the previous assessment of 2017. Top three states showing mangrove cover increase are Gujarat (37 sq km) followed by Maharashtra (16 sq km) and Odisha (8 sq km).
- The extent of bamboo bearing area of the country has been estimated 16.00 million hectare. There is an increase of 0.32 million hectare in bamboo bearing area as compared to the last assessment of ISFR 2017.
- Under the current assessment the total carbon stock in country’s forest is estimated 7,124.6 million tonnes and there an increase of 42.6 million tonnes in the carbon stock of country. The annual increase in the carbon stock is 21.3 million tonnes, which is 78.2 million tonnes CO2 eq.

National Animal Disease Control Programme for FMD and Brucellosis

The Government has launched a new scheme **National Animal Disease Control Programme for FMD and Brucellosis** with a financial outlay of Rs. 13,343.00 crore for five years (2019-20 to 2023-24).

Details -

- It aims to **vaccinate 100% cattle, buffalo, sheep, goat and pig population for FMD and 100% bovine female calves of 4-8 months of age for brucellosis** to prevent loss of Rs. 50,000 crore to the Government exchequer and also to increase the economic output of farmers.
- The mission mode approach for eradication of these diseases is the **biggest step any country of the world has ever taken** either for human or animal vaccination programme to control any disease.
- This programme combined with providing unique Pashu Aadhar to 535 million animals (Cattle, buffalo, sheep, goat, and pig).

[CRZ rules eased for 'Blue Flag' beaches](#)

The Environmental Ministry has relaxed Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) rules that restrict construction near beaches to help States construct infrastructure and enable them to receive 'Blue Flag' certification.

Why such relaxation?

The Blue Flag certification requires beaches to create certain infrastructure — portable toilet blocks, grey water treatment plants, a solar power plant, seating facilities, CCTV surveillance and the like. However, India's CRZ laws don't allow the construction of such infrastructure on beaches and islands. Therefore, the Environment Ministry eased these restrictions for the "purposes of Blue Flag certification".

About 'Blue Flag' certification -

- The 'Blue Flag' beach is an '**eco-tourism model**' and marks out beaches as providing tourists and beachgoers clean and hygienic bathing water, facilities/amenities, a safe and healthy environment, and sustainable development of the area.
- The Blue Flag Programme for beaches and marinas is run **by the international, non-governmental, non-profit organisation FEE (the Foundation for Environmental Education)**.
- The Blue Flag Programme **started in France (by the Foundation for Environmental Education) in 1985** and has been implemented in Europe since 1987, and in areas outside Europe since 2001, when South Africa joined.
- Spain tops the list with 566 such beaches; Greece and France follow with 515 and 395, respectively.

[India achieves complete phase out of ozone depleting chemical](#)

India has successfully achieved the **complete phase out of Hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC)-141 b**, which is a chemical **used by foam manufacturing enterprises** and one of the most potent ozone depleting chemical after Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs).

Details -

India is one among the few countries globally and a pioneer in some cases in the use of technologies, which are non-Ozone Depleting and have a low Global Warming Potential (GWP).

About HCFC-141 b -

- (HCFC)-141 b is used mainly as a blowing agent in the **production of rigid polyurethane (PU) foams**.
- The polyurethane foam sector **has links with important economic sectors** related to buildings, cold storages and cold chain infrastructure, automobiles, commercial refrigeration, domestic appliances such as refrigerators, water geysers, thermo ware, office and domestic furniture applications, specific high value niche applications etc.
- HCFC-141b is **not produced in the country** and all the domestic requirements are met through imports.

Benefits -

The phase out of HCFC-141b from the country has twin environmental benefits viz.

- assisting the healing of the stratospheric ozone layer, and
- towards the climate change mitigation due to transitioning of foam manufacturing enterprises at this scale under HPMP to low global warming potential alternative technologies.

Operation Sankalp

In the backdrop of the deteriorating security situation in the Gulf region, post attacks on merchant ships in the Gulf of Oman in Jun 2019, Indian Navy had commenced Maritime Security Operations, code named **Op SANKALP**, in the Gulf Region **to ensure safe passage of Indian Flag Vessels transiting through the Strait of Hormuz**.

Details -

- Indian Navy warships and aircraft were deployed to establish presence, provide a sense of reassurance to the Indian merchantmen, monitor the ongoing situation and respond to any emergent crises. One war ship is presently deployed for Operation SANKALP.
- The operation is being progressed in **close coordination with all stakeholders including Ministry of Defence, Ministry of External Affairs, Ministry of Shipping, Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and DG, Shipping**.

New facility inaugurated to tackle cybercrime

Union Home Minister has inaugurated the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination (I4C) recently.

Details -

- The **I4C is a seven-pronged system**, which includes **a cybercrime reporting portal, analysis of threats, capacity building, research and innovation, creating an ecosystem for cybercrime management and a joint cybercrime investigation platform for law enforcement agencies**.
- So far, more than 700 police districts and more than 3,900 police stations have been connected with this portal

Background -

The project was approved in October 2018 at an estimated cost of ₹415.86 crore. Fifteen States and Union Territories have agreed to set up Regional Cyber Crime Coordination Centres.

Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar

In order to recognise the excellent work done by individuals and institutions in India in the field of disaster management, Government of India has instituted an annual award known as Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar.

What is the award?

- The award is announced every year on 23rd January, the birth anniversary of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose.
- In case the winner being an institution, it shall receive a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 51 lakhs. This cash prize shall be utilised by the winning institution for Disaster Management related activities only. In case of the winner being an individual, winner shall receive a certificate and a cash prize of Rs. 5 lakhs.

Details -

- For the year 2019, 8th Battalion of the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) located at Ghaziabad, had been selected for the award for its commendable work in disaster management.
- For the year 2020, Disaster Mitigation & Management Centre, Uttarakhand (in the institution category) and Shri Kumar Munnan Singh (Individual category) have been selected for the Subhash Chandra Bose Aapda Prabandhan Puraskar for their commendable work in Disaster Management.

NetSCoFAN

Union Health Minister has launched NetSCoFAN, a network of research & academic institutions working in the area of food & nutrition.

What is it?

- It would comprise of eight groups of institutions working in different areas viz. **biological, chemical, nutrition & labelling, food of animal origin, food of plant origin, water & beverages, food testing, and safer & sustainable packaging.**
- FSSAI has identified eight Nodal Institutions who would develop a 'Ready Reckoner' that will have inventory of all research work, experts and institutions and would carry out and facilitate research, survey and related activities.
- It would identify research gaps in respective areas and collect, collate and develop database on food safety issues for risk assessment activities.

Significance -

The need for identify research gaps in respective areas and collect, collate and develop database on food safety issues for risk assessment activities, will be addressed by NetSCoFAN.

Hallmarking made must for gold jewellery

No jeweller will be allowed to sell gold jewellery or artefacts without hallmark from the **Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) (under Ministry of Consumer Affairs)** from January 15, 2021 onwards.

Details -

- If jewellery or artefacts made of 14, 18 and 22 carat gold are sold without a BIS hallmark, then the jeweller could be charged penalty five times the cost of the object or even given imprisonment up to one year.
- Jewellers have been given a year's time to register themselves with the BIS.
- Instead of 10 grades earlier, hallmarked gold jewellery will now be available in three grades of 14 carat, 18 carat and 22 carat

About Gold Hallmarking -

- **Gold hallmarking is a purity certification and is voluntary in nature now.**
- The BIS is already running a hallmarking scheme for gold jewellery since April 2000 and 40% of gold jewellery is now hallmarked.
- Jewellers will be allowed to sell only 14, 18 and 22 carat gold jewellery.

Significance -

- Consumers have to watch out for four marks on hallmarked gold jewellery: **BIS mark, purity in carat, assay centre's name and jewellers' identification mark.**
- It has been clarified that people who want to exchange their old gold jewellery which doesn't carry a hallmark won't be troubled. This is only for jewellers who are selling new gold jewellery.

[APNA UREA - SonaUgle](#)

Union Ministry of Chemical and Fertilisers has launched a new 'urea fertiliser', called the '**APNA UREA - SonaUgle**'.

About SonaUgle. -

It is developed by HURL (Hindustan Urvarak and Rasayan Limited), which is a joint venture company promoted by the three Maharatna Companies i.e. Coal India Limited (CIL), NTPC Limited (NTPC) and Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) as the lead promoters with FCIL and HFCL as other two partners.

[Padma Awards 2020 announced](#)

The Union Government has announced the Padma Awards for the year 2020 on the eve of Republic Day.

About Padma Awards -

- Padma Awards - one of the highest civilian Awards of the country, are conferred in three categories, namely, **Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri.**
- The Awards are given in various disciplines/ fields of activities, viz.- **art, social work, public affairs, science and engineering, trade and industry, medicine, literature and education, sports, civil service, etc.**
- 'Padma Vibhushan' is awarded for **exceptional and distinguished service;**
- 'Padma Bhushan' for **distinguished service of high order** and;
- 'Padma Shri' for **distinguished service in any field.**
- The awards are announced on the occasion of Republic Day every year.

[Prelims Facts -](#)

Tatrakshak Awards are awarded to the **personnel of Indian Coast Guard** on Republic Day and Independence Day every year since January 26, 1990.

[10 more wetlands in India declared as Ramsar sites](#)

India has added 10 more wetlands to sites protected by the Ramsar Convention.

Details -

The 10 new ones are Nandur Madhameshwar, a first for Maharashtra; KeshopurMiani, Beas Conservation Reserve and Nangal in Punjab; and Nawabganj, Parvati Agra, Saman, Samaspur, Sandi and Sarsai Nawar in Uttar Pradesh. The other Ramsar sites are in Rajasthan, Kerala, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, West Bengal, Jammu and Kashmir, Andhra Pradesh, Manipur, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu and Tripura.

What is a 'wetland'?

Wetlands are defined as: "lands transitional between terrestrial and aquatic eco-systems where the water table is usually at or near the surface or the land is covered by shallow water".

About Ramsar Convention -

- The Convention came in to force in 1975.
- The Convention's mission is "the conservation and wise use of all wetlands through local and national actions and international cooperation, as a contribution towards achieving sustainable development throughout the world".

- **Three pillars of the Convention are** - Work towards the wise use of all their wetlands; Designate suitable wetlands for the list of Wetlands of International Importance (the “Ramsar List”) and ensure their effective management, and; Cooperate internationally on transboundary wetlands, shared wetland systems and shared species.
- Currently, India has 37 Ramsar (after addition of 10 new sites) Sites which are the Wetlands of International importance.

[Medical Termination of Pregnancy \(Amendment\) Bill, 2020](#)

The Union Cabinet has approved the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Bill, 2020 to amend the Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1971.

Features -

Salient features of proposed amendments -

- Proposing requirement for opinion of one provider for termination of pregnancy, up to 20 weeks of gestation and introducing the requirement of opinion of two providers for termination of pregnancy of 20-24 weeks of gestation.
- **Enhancing the upper gestation limit from 20 to 24 weeks for special categories of women** which will be defined in the amendments to the MTP Rules and would include '**vulnerable women** including survivors of rape, victims of incest and other vulnerable women (like differently-abled women, Minors) etc.
- **Upper gestation limit not to apply in cases of substantial foetal abnormalities diagnosed by Medical Board.**
- **Name and other particulars of a woman** whose pregnancy has been terminated **shall not be revealed** except to a person authorised in any law for the time being in force.

[Operation Vanilla](#)

Indian Navy has deployed its ship in Southern Indian Ocean to Antsiranana based on request received from Madagascar.

About the mission -

The ship will undertake Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Mission as part of '**Operation Vanilla**' which has been launched to provide assistance to the affected population of Madagascar post devastation caused by Cyclone Diane.

[SAMPRITI-IX](#)

A joint military training exercise SAMPRITI-IX is being conducted at Umroi, Meghalaya between India and Bangladesh.

Details -

It is the ninth edition of such exercise which is hosted alternately by both countries.