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Polity and Social Issues



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JULY 2017



1. Beijing declaration on Education:

What is the issue?

- BRICS ministers of education and signed representatives adopted Beijing Declaration on Education in a meeting at Beijing
- Ministers from BRICS countries discussed education reforms, approaches to promoting equity in education and fostering quality education, strengthening BRICS collaboration in the field of education, and exchange of students and scholars and teaching faculty among BRICS Member State

About the declaration:

- BRICS nations are committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4)- Education 2030 which aims to "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-long learning opportunities for all" that was set within The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- Considering that higher education contributes to the development of high-level human resources and intellectual support for the economic and social development, studies of BRICS Member States will enhance the mutual understanding between each Member State
- Mobility of faculty and students, and sharing of information among the Member States is of great importance for the implementation of the consensus
- Declaration also encouraged to expand the number of scholarship opportunities to students across BRICS Member States (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa)
- For ensuring coordinated and deeper cooperation among the member states, the meeting reiterated support for the BRICS Network University (NU) to collaborate in the fields of education, research and innovation.
- It also encouraged universities to participate in the BRICS University League.

2. 200th Anniversary of Paika Rebellion:

What is the issue?

- The President of India has inaugurated the 200th anniversary celebrations of the Paika Rebellion of Odisha

Paika Rebellion:

- Paika Rebellion (Paika Bidroha) is one of the major rebellion that took place before first war of Independence in 1817 around Odisha
- It was the first organized armed rebellion against British Raj
- Paikas were essentially the peasant militias of the Gajapati rulers of Odisha who rendered military service to the king during times of war while taking up cultivation during times of peace.
- They unfurled the banner of rebellion against the British under the leadership of Baxi Jagandhu Bidyadhara as early as 1817 to throw off the British yoke.

Brief History of the Rebellion:

- After the Battle of Plassey and Battle of Buxar, British established their sway over Bengal Province and Madras Province
- In 1803, British occupied south of Odisha which was then ruled by Gajapati's of Odisha
- The Gajapati King of Odisha Mukunda Deva-II was a minor
- There was an initial resistance by Jai Rajguru, the custodian of Mukunda Deva-II, which was put down brutally by British
- A few years later, it was the Paikas under Baxi Jagabandhu, the hereditary chief of the militia army of the Gajapati King, rose in rebellion, taking support of tribals and other sections of society.
- The rebellion started in March 1817 and spread quickly.
- Though Paikas played a larger role in the rebellion against the British, it was by no means a rebellion by a small group of people belonging to a particular class.
- The tribals of Ghumusar (part of present day Ganjam and Kandhmal Districts) and other sections of the population actively took part in it
- The Paikas attacked British symbols of power, setting ablaze police stations, administrative offices and the treasury during their march towards Khurda, from where the British fled.
- The Paikas were supported by the rajas of Kanika, Kujang, Nayagarh and Ghumusar and zamindars, village heads and ordinary peasants.

- The rebellion quickly spread to Purl, Pipli Cuttack and other parts of the province
- British managed to defeat the rebellion within three months
- Baxi Jagabandhu was finally arrested in 1825 and died in captivity in 1829.

3. Hundred years of Champaran Satyagraha:

What is the issue?

- Prime Minister has inaugurated an exhibition named 'Swachhagraha – Bapu Ko Karyanjali – Ek Abhiyan, Ek Pradarshani' in the Delhi to mark 100 years of Mahatma Gandhi's first ever experiment of Satyagraha which he started in Champaran, Bihar

Significance of the Movement:

- The Champaran movement is significant because it was the first political action that Gandhi led in India for a deeply oppressed peasantry in a remote part of the country

About Champaran Satyagraha:

- Champaran Movement was undertaken in the erstwhile undivided Champaran district in northern Bihar.
- Gandhi went there in April, 1917 on learning about the abuses suffered by the cultivators of the district, forced into growing indigo by British planters/estate owners.
- 'The Champaran tenant', informs Gandhi, 'was bound by law to plant three out of every twenty parts of his land with indigo for his landlord'. This system was called Tinkathia.
- Gandhi was thoroughly persuaded by Rajkumar Shukla, an indigo cultivator from Champaran to tackle this issue
- The local authorities like the Chairman of the Planters Association, Commissioner of Tirhut Division and Police Superintendent unsuccessfully tried to dissuade Gandhi from undertaking his inquiry in Champaran
- The local Collector wrote to Gandhi saying he was free to conduct the inquiry
- Gandhi's method of inquiry at Champaran was based on surveys by the volunteers.

- The respondents who willingly gave statements should sign the papers or give thumb impressions. For those unwilling to participate, the reasons must be recorded by the volunteers.
- The principal volunteers in this survey were mostly lawyers like Babu Rajendra Prasad, Dharnidhar Prasad, Gorakh Prasad, Ramnawami Prasad, Sambhusaran and Anugraha Narain Sinha.
- Apart from these several villages were visited and hundreds of ryats (tenants) were queried in their homes. Within a month nearly 4000 statements were taken. Planters refused to attend meetings where ryats were present.
- The Bihar administration grew anxious at Gandhi's prolonged stay in Champaran. Thus on June 4, 1917 Sir Edward Gait, the Lieutenant Governor of Bihar, while receiving Gandhi at Ranchi declared the formation of a formal inquiry committee with Gandhi aboard
- The Champaran Inquiry Committee began its preliminary meeting on July 11, 1917. The Committee submitted its final report on October 4.
- The Government accepted almost all its recommendations to the benefit of the ryats. The principal recommendation accepted was complete abolition of Tinkathia system.
- The victory at Champaran established Gandhi's repute in Indian politics.

4. Selection of EC must be transparent: SC

What is the issue?

- Apex court advocates enact of legislation to fill gaps in Constitution.

What SC suggested?

- Election commissioners must be selected through most transparent and just process formalized in a law enacted by parliament.
- Even though most outstanding people are made appointed till date, SC stressed the need of having a legislative procedure.

Need for transparent process

- There is an ample room for the ruling party to choose someone whose loyalty is ensured and renders the selection procedure vulnerable to manipulations and partisanship which is violative of Article 14 of the constitution.

1. Ahmadabad as a UNESCO's World Heritage Property

What is the issue?

- UNESCO has declared the Six hundred year old Ahmadabad city as World Heritage Property

Significance of the move:

- Thus, the acceptance of the proposal highlights historic city of Ahmedabad's exemplary settlement architecture and town planning.
- Ahmadabad has now joined the ranks of Paris, Vienna, Cairo, Brussels, Rome and Edinburgh and put India on the world heritage city map.
- This makes the walled city of Ahmedabad the first city in India and the third in Asia to be inscribed to the World Heritage List.
- The international recognition to the city is a matter of pride and it will boost the local economy in a number of ways.
- It is expected to give a tremendous fillip to domestic and international tourism leading to increased employment generation, creation of world-class infrastructure and augmentation of sale of local handicrafts, handlooms and heritage memorabilia.
- India now has overall 36 World Heritage Inscriptions with 28 Cultural, 07 Natural and 01 Mixed site.
- While India stands second largest in number after China in terms of number of world heritage properties in ASPAC (Asia and Pacific) region, it is overall seventh in the world.

Brief History of Ahmadabad city:

- Founded in 15th century, the walled city of Ahmadabad, on the eastern bank of the Sabarmati River, presents a rich architectural heritage. Within this complex are 28 ASI Centrally Protected Monuments.
- The urban structures of the historic city of Ahmedabad are distinctive due to their puras (neighbourhoods), pols (residential streets), and khadki (inner entrances to pols) largely made of timber.

- The historic architecture reflects symbols and myths connected with its inhabitants.
- The urban fabric is made up of densely-packed traditional houses (pols) in gated traditional streets (puras) with characteristic features such as bird feeders, public wells and religious institutions.
- It is a unique example of multi-religious and multicultural coexistence.

2. Climate change impacts Sunderbans

Why in news?

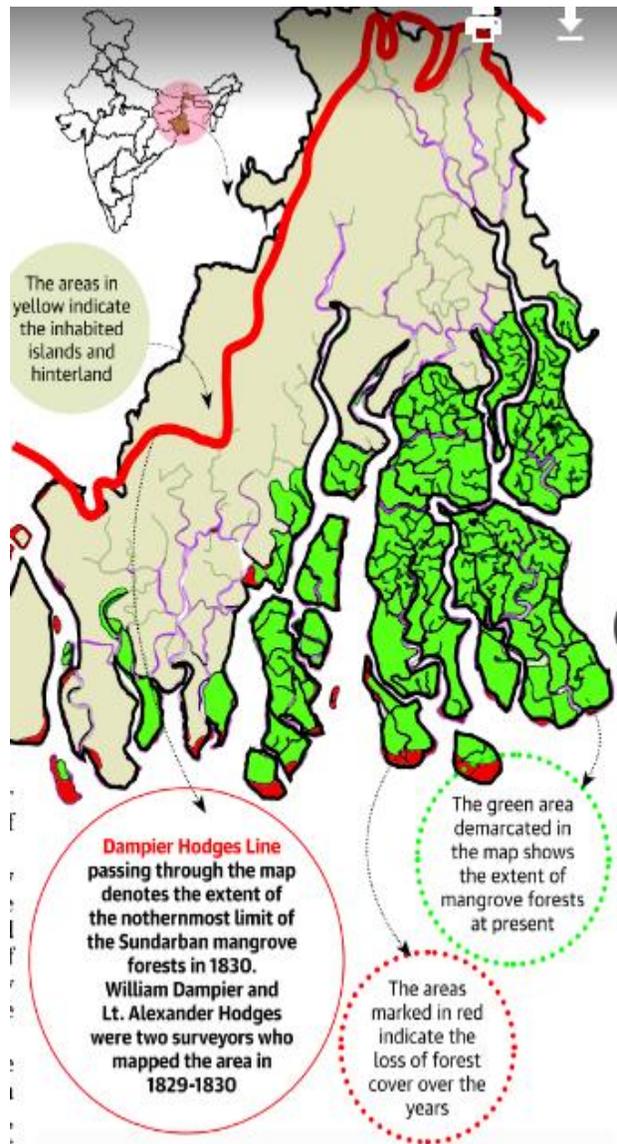
- A report got released titled “Mangrove Forest Cover Changes in Indian Sundarban (1986-2012) Using Remote Sensing and GIS” by Jadavpur University speaking about lost mangrove forest cover.
- The loss in the mangrove forest in the Indian Sunderbans is about 5.5%.

What are the reasons behind this?

- The reasons for climate change impact on Sunderbans are Rise in temperatures, Rise in sea level, No minimal fresh water inflow etc.

What will be the impact?

- Climate change and sea level rise will pose serious threat to the carbon sequestering potential and other ecosystem services of mangroves forests.
- Sea level rise is even responsible for coastal erosion, coastal flooding and increase in number of tidal creeks.
- Without minimal fresh water inflow there is a change in mangrove succession, and freshwater loving species of mangroves are replaced by salt-water loving ones.



1. Investment Facilitation Mechanism:

What is the issue?

- European Union (EU) and India announced the establishment of an Investment Facilitation Mechanism (IFM) for EU Investments in India.
- The mechanism will allow for a close coordination between the European Union and the Government of India with an aim to promote and facilitate EU investment in India.

Background:

- This agreement builds on the Joint Statement of the 13th EU-India Summit held in Brussels in March 2016, where the EU had welcomed India's readiness to establish such a mechanism and leaders from both sides
- Both the nations have reaffirmed their shared commitment to oppose protectionism and to work in favour of a fair, transparent and rule-based trade and investment environment.

Importance of the Facilitation:

- The EU is the largest foreign investor in India and this initiative helps ensuring a more robust, effective and predictable business environment for the EU investors
- There are currently more than 6,000 EU companies present in India, providing direct and indirect employment to over 6 million people.
- As part of the IFM, the EU Delegation to India and the Department of Industrial Policy & Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce & Industry, agreed to hold regular high level meetings to assess and facilitate "ease of doing business" for EU investors in India.
- The IFM has been established with the key objectives of paving the way for identifying and solving problems faced by EU companies and investors with regard to their operations in India.
- The IFM will cover new investors as well as those already established in India.
- The IFM is also going to serve as a platform for discussing general suggestions from the point of view of EU companies and investors with regard to ease of doing business in India, which would boost and encourage the EU investors to avail the investment opportunities available in India”.

- It will create a single-window entry point for EU companies that need assistance for their investments at the central or state level.
- Invest India, the official Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of the Government of India, will also be part of the Mechanism.
- The DIPP will also facilitate participation of other relevant ministries and authorities on a case-to-case basis.

2. ECO MARK Label on Coir Products:

What is the issue?

- Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises is planning to implement Eco labeling for coir and coir products which can boost its market potential

Need of Eco Mark:

- The Coir industry is very much in need of the Eco Labeling for its products which will definitely boost its marketing potential both abroad and within the country
- The Eco Mark Labeling for coir and coir products will boost the exports of these products in view of the growing affinity towards natural/eco-friendly products in the international market.

About Eco Mark Scheme:

- Eco Mark is a voluntary non-binding scheme which labels consumer products as environment friendly based upon certain environmental as well as quality parameters.
- To increase consumer awareness, the Government launched the eco-labelling scheme known as 'Eco Mark' in 1991 for easy identification of environment-friendly products.

Which products are eligible for Eco Mark?

- Any product which is made, used or disposed of in way that significantly reduces the harm it would otherwise cause the environment could be considered as Environment-Friendly Product.
- They have less potential for pollution during their entire life cycle i.e. raw material, manufacturing, use and disposal.

1. India declares itself free from Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza

What is the issue?

- India has declared itself free from Bird Flu (highly pathogenic Avian Influenza - H5N1 and H5N8) and notified it to the World Organisation for Animal Health

Significance of the declaration:

- The move will help India resume export of poultry products to the countries which had banned trade in such items early this year.
- The countries which banned Indian poultry products include United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Hong Kong.

Background:

- India had reported outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian influenza at various epicenters in Delhi, Gwalior (MP), Rajpura (Punjab), Hissar (Haryana), Bellary (Karnataka), Allappuzha and Kottayam (Kerala), Ahmedabad (Gujarat), Daman (Daman) and Khordha and Angul (Odisha during October, 2016 to February, 2017
- All the outbreaks of Avian Influenza (HPAI) mentioned above were notified to OIE (World organisation for Animal Health), the control and containment operations were carried out as per the Action Plan on Preparedness, Control and Containment of Avian Influenza.
- Surveillance was carried out throughout the country and around the areas of the outbreaks since completion of the operation (including culling, disinfection and clean-up) and surveillance in the states showed no evidence of presence of Avian Influenza Virus.
- In view of the above, India has declared itself free from Avian Influenza (H5N8 and H5N1)

2. Conversion of Sea Water into Drinking Water:

What is the issue?

- NIOT has developed technology for conversion of sea water to drinking water

About the issue:

- The National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), an autonomous body of the Ministry of Earth Sciences, has indigenously developed and demonstrated Low Temperature Thermal Desalination (LTTD) technology for conversion of sea water to drinking water.
- Three desalination plants each with a capacity of 1 lakh litre of potable water per day, based on LTTD technology have been successfully commissioned by NIOT one each at Kavaratti, Minicoy, and Agatti islands of the Union Territory of Lakshadweep.
- Recently, Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation has approved the proposal of Lakshadweep Administration for establishment of 6 LTTD plants each with capacity 1.5 lakh liters per day in the islands of Amini, Androth, Kadamat, Chetlat, Kalpeni and Kiltan of Lakshadweep.
- One experimental LTTD plant using condenser waste heat from power plant was set up at North Chennai Thermal Power Station (NCTPS).
- The experimental LTTD plant uses the surface seawater to condense the vapours generated from the thermal effluent to produce potable water as well as boiler quality water.

About LTTD:

- The LTTD is a process under which the warm surface sea water is flash evaporated at low pressure and the vapour is condensed with cold deep sea water.
- The LTTD technology does not require any chemical pre and post-treatment of seawater and thus the pollution problems are minimal and suitable for island territories.
- Since no effluent treatment is required, it gives less operational maintenance problems compared to other desalination processes.
- The LTTD technology is completely indigenous, robust and environment friendly.
- The cost per liter of desalination would depend on the technology used and cost of electricity which varies from place to place.
- The Reverse Osmosis, a membrane process, is globally accepted technology suitable for desalination of saline water, which is quite different from LTTD technology.

3. Installation of Gagan System in Aircraft:

What is the issue?

- Government proposes to make it compulsory to install GAGAN navigation system in all aircrafts in the country.

Which act makes it mandatory?

- In accordance with the provisions of the National Civil Aviation Policy, 2016, it is mandatory for all aircrafts registered in India from 1st January, 2019 to be GPS Augmented Geo Navigation System (GAGAN) enabled.

About GAGAN System:

- GAGAN System has been certified for en-route and Approach with Vertical Guidance (APV1) operations by Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) in December, in accordance with essential international standards.
- GAGAN System is continuously monitored on 24X7 basis to meet all the international standards of accuracy, availability, integrity and continuity requirements.
- The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and the Airports Authority of India (AAI) have implemented the GAGAN project as a Satellite Based Augmentation System for the Indian Airspace.
- According to ISRO, the primary objective of GAGAN is to establish a certifiable satellite based augmentation system for safety-of-life applications.

1. Mission Parivar Vikas:

What is the issue?

- Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has launched a new scheme for the improvement in family planning

About the Scheme:

- Mission Parivar Vikas is a new initiative conceived by the Ministry with a strategic focus on improving access through provision of services, promotional schemes, commodity security, capacity building, enabling environment and intensive monitoring

Objectives of the Scheme:

- The main objective of 'Mission Parivas Vikas' is to accelerate access to high quality family planning choices based on information, reliable services and supplies within a rights-based framework.
- Improve access to contraceptives through delivering assured services, dovetailing with new promotional schemes, ensuring commodity security.
- It will also ensure building capacity (service providers), creating an enabling environment along with close monitoring and implementation.

Implementation of the scheme:

- Initially the scheme will be launched in seven states which include Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Assam
- A total of 146 districts have been identified for implementation in these states
- As part of the programme, the health ministry will distribute a kit containing products of family planning and personal hygiene among newly-wed couples
- The kits will be distributed by ASHA workers to encourage inter-spousal communication and consensual decision-making on reproductive and sexual health, delaying the birth of the first child and spacing the second.
- 'Saas Bahu Sammelans' will be held to facilitate improved communication between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law and bridge the gap in their attitudes and beliefs about reproductive and sexual health.

- Special buses called 'SAARTHI-Awareness on Wheels' will travel through these districts to generate awareness, sensitize the community and disseminate family planning messages
- The Ministry has also launched software "Family Planning Logistics Management Information System (FP-LMIS)" designed to provide information on the demand and distribution of contraceptives to health facilities and ASHAs to strengthen the supply chain management.

2. National Bamboo Mission has been renamed

What is the issue?

- The National Bamboo Mission has been renamed as National Agro-Forestry and Bamboo Mission (NABM)
- As per available reports 3, 61,791 ha. Area has been covered in forest & non-forest land, 91,715 ha. Area taken up for improvement of existing stock for higher productivity (forest & non-forest areas) under the Mission against targets of 3, 62,848 ha. 69,410 ha. respectively

About the Mission:

- It is a centrally sponsored scheme under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers welfare launched in 2006
- The Mission envisages promoting holistic growth of bamboo sector by adopting area-based, regionally differentiated strategy and to increase the area under bamboo cultivation
- Under the Mission, 108 nos. of markets (Bamboo wholesale & retail markets near villages, etc.) have been established for providing marketing avenues to bamboo farmers for their raw bamboo as well as finished products.

Objectives of the Mission:

- To promote the growth of the bamboo sector through as an area based regionally differentiated strategy
- To increase the coverage of area under bamboo in potential areas, with improved varieties to enhance yields
- To promote marketing of bamboo and bamboo based handicrafts

- To establish convergence and synergy among stake-holders for the development of bamboo
- To promote, develop and disseminate technologies through a seamless blend of traditional wisdom and modern scientific knowledge.
- To generate employment opportunities for skilled and unskilled persons, especially unemployed youths.

Importance of Bamboo:

- Bamboo is essentially a type of grass that more than 300 ethnic groups in the northeast have traditionally been using in every stages of life, from birth to death, besides it being a delicacy.
- Bamboo plays an important role in terms of food stuff nutrients and livelihood related ecological security
- Bamboo sector can extend an important contribution in employment creation, to provide unabated livelihood means to the rural weaker sections and for abolition of poverty as permanent and renewable natural resource in the perspective of its constant development.
- India's 13% forest area is comprised of bamboo. More than 137 species of bamboo is grown in the country which is used for 1500 diversified utilities.

Major Drawback of Bamboo cultivation:

- Bamboo often called as 'Green Gold' has often been in focus for wrong reasons
- The flowering of bamboo every 50-55 years leads to dramatic increase in the population of rats that destroy crops triggering famine, locally called Mautam.

3. JIGYASA Programme

What is the issue?

- Ministry of Human Resource and Development has launched student-scientist connect programme 'JIGYASA'.

About the Programme:

- "JIGYASA" is one of the major initiative taken up by CSIR at national level, during its Platinum Jubilee Celebration Year

- Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), has joined hands with Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS) to implement this programme.
- The “JIGYASA” would inculcate the culture of inquisitiveness on one hand and scientific temper on the other, amongst the school students and their teachers.
- The Programme is expected to connect 1151 Kendriya Vidyalayas with 38 National Laboratories of CSIR targeting 100,000 students and nearly 1000 teachers annually.
- The program will also enable the students and teachers to practically live the theoretical concepts taught in science by visiting CSIR laboratories and by participating in mini-science projects.
- The model of engagements is through activities such as Student Residential Programmes, Scientists as Teachers and Teachers as Scientists, Lab specific activities / Onsite Experiments, Visits of Scientists to Schools/Outreach Programmes, Science Exhibitions, Teacher Workshops and Tinkering Laboratories etc.

1. Joint Interpretative Notes on Agreement between India and Bangladesh

What is the issue?

- The Union Cabinet chaired has given its approval for the Joint Interpretative Notes (JIN) on the Agreement between India and Bangladesh for the Promotion and Protection of Investments.

What is a Joint Interpretative note?

- The JIN includes interpretative notes to be jointly adopted for many clauses.
- It includes the definition of investor, definition of investment, exclusion of taxation measures, Fair and Equitable Treatment, National Treatment and Most Favoured Nation treatment and Settlement of Disputes between an Investor-and a Contracting Party
- With increasing Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) disputes, issuance of such statements is likely to have strong persuasive value before tribunals.

Benefits of the move:

- The JIN would impart clarity to the interpretation of the existing agreement between India and Bangladesh for the Promotion and Protection of Investments (BIPA).
- It will ensure to ensure smooth implementation of the investment promotion and protection pact
- Joint Interpretative Statements, in general, play an important supplementary role in strengthening the investment treaty regime.

2. DOKLAM Stand off

What is the issue?

- New Delhi warned China about serious security implications.

Key points

- India expressed serious concern to Chinese government over constructions and other activities.

- Chinese troops transgress over non finalized borders in Sikkim and into Bhutanese territory are unprecedented and are violation of agreement with Bhutan from 1998 and 1999.
- This action is even violation of maintaining status quo with India.
- Dok la (Doklam) is a tri-junction in Sikkim between India, China and Bhutan

3. Border Infrastructure

Why in news?

- Infrastructure development along the border with china has picked up.

Key points to know

- Across Tibet china undertook many massive infrastructure projects making military reach the border very simple.
- In 2013 cabinet committee on security headed by prime minister approved 64000 crore plan to raise mountain strike corps. It was to be completed by 2020.
- Present government further strengthening strike corps and border infrastructure with China.
- India constructing some critical bridges in the north east this will cut down time for the troop movement.
- Recent Dhola-Sadiya Bridge cut down the distance between Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

Mountain Strike Corps

- XVII Corps of Indian army is the first mountain strike corps of India.
- Motto behind building this corps is to have a quick reaction force and as well as counter offensive force against China and LAC.
- Its headquarters are in Panagarh in West Bengal.

1. President's Lady

- President Pranab Mukherjee received the first copy of a book on his late wife, Suvra Mukherjee.
- The book has been written by Sangeeta Ghosh.

2. Pant – Mirza Agreement

- It is an agreement between India and Pakistan under the 'Bilateral Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines' signed in 1974.
- It facilitated visits by nationals of India and Pakistan to mutually agreed list of religious shrines in each other's country.
- This includes visits to shrines of Hazrat Moinuddin Chishti (Ajmer), Hazrat Nizamuddin Auliya (Delhi), Hazrat Amir Khusro (Delhi), Hazrat Mujaddid Alf Sani (Sirhind Sharif) and Hazrat Khwaja Alauddin Ali Ahmed Sabir (Kalyar Sharif) in India
- The shrines in Pakistan are Shadani Darbar (Hyat Pitafi), Shri Katasraj Dham (Lahore), Gurudwaras of Shri Nankana Sahib (Rawalpindi), Shri Panja Sahib (Rawalpindi) and Shri Dera Sahib (Lahore)
- Under the Protocol it is the obligation of the concerned country to make every effort to ensure that the places of worship in the agreed list of shrines under the Protocol are properly maintained and their sanctity preserved.

3. Mizo peace accord

What is the issue?

- Mizoram has celebrated the 31st anniversary of signing the historic 'Mizo peace accord'.

About Mizo peace accord:

- The Mizo Accord was signed by the Mizo National Front (MNF) leader Laldenga, Mizoram Chief Secretary Lalkhama, and Union Home Secretary R D Pradhan on June 30 1986
- The Mizo Accord was signed ushering in an era of peace after 20 years of violence and disturbance in the state.