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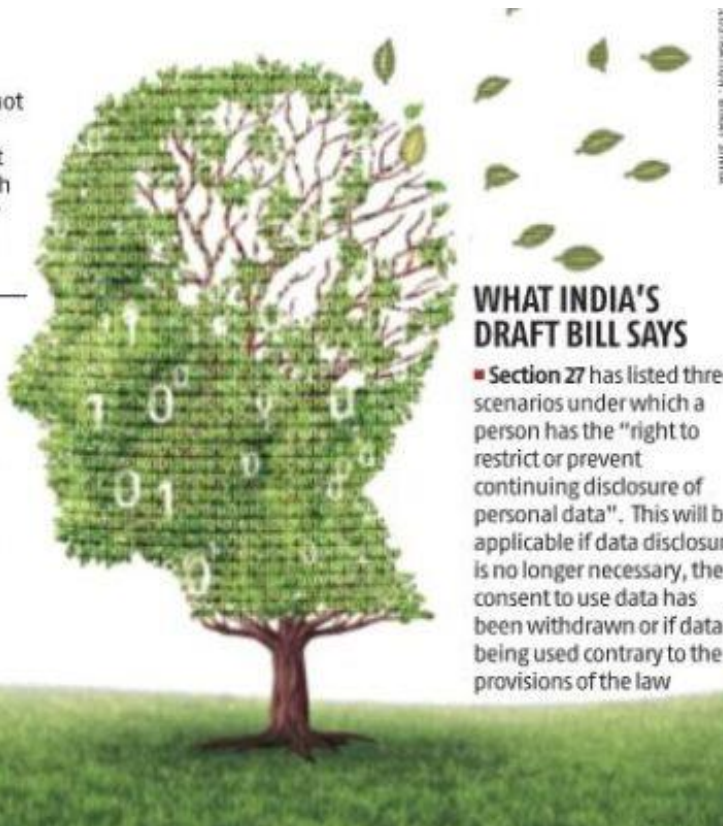
RIGHT TO BE FORGOTTEN: PRIVACY VS FREEDOM

WHAT EU RULES SAY

- **Article 17** of the GDPR gives individuals the right to get personal data erased in six scenarios, including withdrawal of consent, or if data is no longer relevant
- **The request** may not be considered if it contradicts the right to freedom of speech and information, or goes against public interest

HOW IT CURRENTLY WORKS

- **To request removal** from a search engine, say Google, one must complete a form through its website
- **Google's removal** request process requires the applicant to identify their country of residence, personal information, a list of the URLs to be removed, along with a short description of each one, and attachment of legal identification
- **If the request** is approved, searches using the individual's name will no longer result in aforementioned content. But the content won't be erased.
- **In India**, an independent authority would decide on such requests



WHAT INDIA'S DRAFT BILL SAYS

- **Section 27** has listed three scenarios under which a person has the "right to restrict or prevent continuing disclosure of personal data". This will be applicable if data disclosure is no longer necessary, the consent to use data has been withdrawn or if data is being used contrary to the provisions of the law

Ashutosh Kaushik who won reality shows **Bigg Boss** in 2008 and **MTV Roadies 5.0** has approached the **Delhi High Court** with a plea saying that his videos, photographs and articles etc. be removed from the internet citing his "**Right to be Forgotten**".

In the plea, Kaushik also maintains that the "**Right to be Forgotten**" goes in sync with the "**Right to Privacy**", which is an **integral part of Article 21 of the Constitution**, which concerns the right to life.

Kaushik's plea mentions that the **posts and videos on internet** related to him have caused the "**petitioner psychological pain for his diminutive acts**, which were erroneously committed a decade ago as the recorded videos, photos, articles of the same are available on various search engines/online platforms".

The plea also states that “**the petitioner’s mistakes in his personal life** becomes and remains in public knowledge for generations to come and therefore in the instant case, this aspect acts as an ingredient for litigation before this Hon’ble court. Consequently, the **values enshrined under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution** and the **emergent jurisprudential concept of the Right to be Forgotten** becomes extremely relevant in the present case.”

Kaushik’s plea refers to an incident from 2009 when he was held by the Mumbai traffic police for drunken driving. About ten days after Kaushik’s arrest, the metropolitan magistrate court sentenced him to one-day imprisonment, imposed a fine of Rs 3,100 and also suspended his driving licence for two years. At the time, Kaushik was charged for drunken driving, for not wearing a helmet, for not carrying his driving licence and for not obeying the police officers who were on duty.

The matter was heard by the **single Judge bench of Justice Rekha Palli**. The next hearing on this matter will be held on 20 August 2021.

The **Right to be Forgotten** falls under the purview of an **individual’s right to privacy**, which is governed by the **Personal Data Protection Bill** that is yet to be passed by Parliament.

In 2017, the Right to Privacy was declared a fundamental right by the Supreme Court in its landmark verdict. The court said at the time that, “**the right to privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21** and as a part of the freedoms guaranteed by **Part III of the Constitution**”.

The **Personal Data Protection Bill** was introduced in Lok Sabha on 11 December 2019 and it aims to set out provisions meant for the protection of the personal data of individuals.

Clause 20 under Chapter V of this draft bill titled “**Rights of Data Principal**” mentions the “**Right to be Forgotten**.” It states that the “**data principal (the person to whom the data is related)** shall have the right to restrict or prevent the continuing disclosure of his personal data by a data fiduciary”.



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Therefore, broadly, under the **Right to be forgotten**, users can **de-link, limit, delete or correct the disclosure** of their personal information held by data fiduciaries. A data fiduciary means any person, including the State, a company, any juristic entity or any individual who alone or in conjunction with others determines the purpose and means of processing of personal data.

Even so, **the sensitivity of the personal data and information** cannot be determined independently by the person concerned, but will be overseen by the **Data Protection Authority (DPA)**. This means that while the draft bill gives some provisions under which a data principal can seek that his data be removed, but his or her rights are subject to authorisation by the Adjudicating Officer who works for the DPA.

While assessing the data principal's request, this officer will **need to examine the sensitivity of the personal data, the scale of disclosure, degree of accessibility** sought to be restricted, **role of the data principal in public life** and the nature of the disclosure among some other variables.

Do other countries recognize this right?

The **Center for Internet and Society** notes that the “**right to be forgotten**” gained prominence when the matter was referred to the Court of Justice of European Union (CJEC) in 2014 by a Spanish Court.

In this case, one Mario Costeja González disputed that the Google search results for his name continued to show results leading to an auction notice of his reposed home. González said that the fact that **Google continued to show these in its search results related to him was a breach of his privacy**, given that the matter was resolved, the center notes.

In the **European Union (EU)**, the **right to be forgotten empowers individuals to ask organisations to delete their personal data**. It is provided by the EU's **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**, a law passed by the 28-member bloc in 2018.

According to the EU GDPR's website, the **right to be forgotten appears in Recitals 65 and 66 and in Article 17 of the regulation**, which states, “The data subject shall have the **right to obtain from**



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the controller the erasure of personal data concerning him or her without undue delay and the controller shall have the obligation to **erase personal data without undue delay**” (if one of a number of conditions applies).

In its landmark ruling, the **EU’s highest court ruled in 2019** that the ‘**right to be forgotten**’ under European law would not apply beyond the borders of EU member states. The **European Court of Justice (ECJ)** ruled in favour of the search engine giant Google, which was contesting a **French regulatory authority’s order** to have web addresses removed from its global database.

This ruling was considered an **important victory for Google**, and laid down that the **online privacy law cannot be used to regulate the internet in countries** such as **India**, which are **outside the EU**.

1.1 BURIAL OF RETROSPECTIVE TAX

Recently, the government has decided to **withdraw the controversial retrospective tax laws** on indirect transfer of assets.

What is a Retrospective Tax?

- The meaning of the word ‘**retrospective**’ is ‘**looking backward**’.
 - It relates to thinking about the past, ‘**looking back over the past**’, etc.
- In terms of taxation, **retrospective tax means giving effect to the amendment in the present law** before the date on which the changes were brought in.
 - It **taxes a transaction** that took place prior to the law being framed.
- A retrospective tax is one that is **charged for transactions in the long past**.
- It can be a **new or additional charge on transactions done** in the past.

Purpose of Retrospective Tax

- The retrospective tax is to **make adjustments when policies in the past and the present are so vastly different** that tax paid before under the old policy could be said to have been less.
- Retrospective taxation **allows a nation to implement a rule to impose a tax on certain products, goods or services and deals** and charge companies from a time before the date on which the law is passed.
- The countries use this form of taxation to **rectify any deviations in the taxation policies** that, in the past, allowed firms to take benefit from any loophole.

Reasons for withdrawal of Retrospective Tax

- Such retrospective amendments **militate against the principle of tax certainty** and **damage India's reputation** as an attractive destination.
- It would **reignite the choice of India as a favourable investment destination** which already has low tax rates.

Implications of withdrawal of Retrospective Tax

- It recognises the **importance of certainty in tax laws**, which is key in ensuring confidence in India as an attractive investment destination.
- It could help **restore India's reputation as a fair and predictable regime** apart from helping put an end to unnecessary, prolonged and expensive litigation.
- It could **favourably impact foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows** into the country and will have a trickle-down effect on the secondary markets.

1.2 RBI MONETARY POLICY 2021

Recently, the **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has kept the key **policy rate unchanged**.

Key Highlights

- The MPC has kept **Repo rate** (the RBI's lending rate to banks) **unchanged at four per cent** for the seventh time in a row, and **reverse repo rate** (the RBI's borrowing rate from banks) at **3.35 per cent**.

- The panel has also **raised the inflation target** for fiscal 2001-22 but maintained the growth forecast at 9.5 per cent.
- The MPC has **decided to continue with an accommodative stance** as long as necessary to revive and sustain growth on a durable basis and continue to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the economy.
- The RBI panel says the nascent and hesitant recovery in the economy needs to be nurtured through **fiscal, monetary and sectoral policy levers**.
- The **elevated inflation level and delayed recovery** in the economy would have prompted the panel to keep rates steady.

Why Inflation target is hiked?

- The **input prices are rising across manufacturing and services sectors** and weak demand and efforts towards cost cutting are tempering the pass-through to output prices.
- A calibrated **reduction of the indirect tax component of pump prices** by the Centre and states can help to substantially lessen cost pressures with crude oil prices at elevated levels.
- The RBI Governor has said that the **crude oil prices are volatile with implications** for imported cost pressures on inflation.
- The **combination of elevated prices of industrial raw materials, high pump prices of petrol and diesel with their second-round effects**, and **logistics costs continue** to impinge adversely on cost conditions for manufacturing and services.
- The Inflation may remain close to the **upper tolerance band up to Q2 of 2021-22**, but these pressures should ebb in Q3 of 2021-22 on account of Kharif harvest arrivals and as supply side measures take effect.

MPC stance on growth rate

- The MPC has **retained the real GDP growth at 9.5 per cent in 2021-22** consisting of 21.4 per cent in Q1, 7.3 per cent in Q2, 6.3 per cent in Q3 and 6.1 per cent in Q4 of 2021-22.
- The **Real GDP growth for Q1 of 2022-23** is projected at 17.2 per cent.
- The measures to be adopted to kick-start a **long-awaited revival**:
 - Improving capacity utilization;
 - Rising steel consumption;
 - Higher imports of capital goods;
 - Congenial monetary and financial conditions; and
 - The economic packages announced by the Central Government

- The **innovation and working models adopted during the pandemic by businesses** will continue to reap efficiency and productivity gains even after the pandemic recedes.

The high-frequency indicators suggest that **consumption (both private and Government), investment and external demand** are all on the path of regaining traction.

1.3 PM TO RELEASE NEXT INSTALMENT OF FINANCIAL BENEFIT UNDER PM-KISAN SCHEME

Recently, the Prime Minister has released the next instalment of financial benefit under **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)**.

PM-KISAN Scheme?

- It is a **financial assistance scheme** of central government to farmers where they get **Rs 6000 annually as minimum income support**.
- It became **operational in December 2018**.
- It is **100% centrally funded** without the involvement of any state government.
- The amount provided under scheme will **equally be distributed in 3 equal installments every 4 months** the farmers will be able to receive **Rs 2,000 in his/her bank account**.

Objectives of PM-KISAN

- It aims to supplement the **financial needs of the Small and Marginal Farmers (SMFs)** in procuring various inputs to ensure proper crop health and appropriate yields.
- It also aims to **commensurate with the anticipated farm income** at the end of the each crop cycle.
- It would also **protect them from falling in the clutches of moneylenders** for meeting such expenses and ensure their continuance in the farming activities.

Eligibility under PM-KISAN

- As per the eligibility criteria of the scheme, **any one member of the family from husband & wife can get benefits** from the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN).
- The State Government and UT administration will **identify the farmer families** which are eligible for support as per scheme guidelines.
- The following categories of beneficiaries of higher economic status **shall not be eligible** for benefit under the scheme.

- All Institutional Land holders
- Farmer families which belong to one or more of the following categories:
 - Former and present holders of constitutional posts
 - Former and present Ministers/ State Ministers and former/present Members of Lok Sabha/ Rajya Sabha/ State Legislative Assemblies/ State Legislative Councils, former and present Mayors of Municipal Corporations, former and present Chairpersons of District Panchayats.
 - All serving or retired officers and employees of Central/ State Government Ministries /Offices/Departments and its field units Central or State PSEs and Attached offices /Autonomous Institutions under Government as well as regular employees of the Local Bodies (Excluding Multi Tasking Staff /Class IV/Group D employees)
 - All superannuated/retired pensioners whose monthly pension is Rs.10,000/-or more (Excluding Multi Tasking Staff / Class IV/Group D employees) of above category
 - All Persons who paid Income Tax in last assessment year
 - Professionals like Doctors, Engineers, Lawyers, Chartered Accountants, and Architects registered with Professional bodies and carrying out profession by undertaking practices.

Monitoring of PM-KISAN Scheme

- For effective review and monitoring of the scheme, a **Project Monitoring Unit (PMU)** at Central level will be set up in DAC&FW.
- The **PMU headed by Chief Executive Officer (CEO)**, shall also undertake publicity campaign (Information, Education and Communication-IEC).
- A stratified **review/monitoring mechanism** at National, State and District Level.
- At the National level, there will be a **Monitoring Committee headed by Cabinet Secretary**. State Government. shall also notify the Monitoring Committees at the State & the District Level.

1.4 EXPLAINER-HOW HACKERS STOLE \$600 MILLION IN CRYPTO TOKENS FROM POLY NETWORK

Recently, the hackers pulled off the **biggest ever cryptocurrency heist**, stealing \$613 million in digital coins from token-swapping platform **Poly Network**.

Poly Network?

- It is a **decentralized finance (DeFi) platform**.

- It facilitates **peer-to-peer transactions** with a focus on allowing users to transfer or swap tokens across different blockchains.
- A customer could use **Poly Network to transfer tokens** such as bitcoin from the Ethereum blockchain to the Binance Smart Chain.
- It was launched by the founders of **Chinese blockchain project Neo**.

Hacking of Poly Network

- The Poly Network operates on the **Binance Smart Chain, Ethereum and Polygon blockchains**.
- The **tokens are swapped between the blockchains** using a smart contract which contains instructions on when to release the assets to the counterparties.
- The Poly Network uses one of the **smart contracts to transfer tokens between blockchains** maintains large amounts of liquidity to allow users to efficiently swap tokens.
- The attackers stole funds in more than **12 different cryptocurrencies**, including ether and a type of bitcoin.

Challenges associated with Cryptocurrency

- **Skeptical about the very idea of crypto-currency:** In India, the reflex action is to bar what you can't understand and ban what you can't control.
 - The law enforcement and taxation agencies have clamoured for a ban, expressing wariness of these being used as instruments for illicit activities, including money laundering and terror funding.
- **Lack of government support to tech firms:** The funds that have gone into the Indian blockchain start-ups are less than 0.2 per cent of the amount the sector raised globally.
 - The current central government approach makes it near-impossible for entrepreneurs and investors to acquire much economic benefit.
- **Lack of backing by a tangible asset:** It means they may have no intrinsic value from a traditional perspective, but a virtual market value.
 - Their price discovery is in uncharted territory, which heightens the risk of market manipulation and has implications for consumer protection.
- **Threat to system stability:** The cryptocurrency raise concerns of information asymmetry, hacking vulnerability and fire sales.

- **Lack of legalization:** They are purely digital products, and our authorities are not geared to handle this advanced technology.
 - The digital currency is a decentralized virtual entity that is why the lack of legislation regulating these digital currencies and providing any sort of user protection has become a huge challenge.
- **Technology is still immature:** The interoperability or the ability of computer system software to exchange and utilize information is a challenge faced by Blockchain.
- The technology has been divided to make multiple uses of it in different industrial domains, separate form cryptocurrency.

1.5 WHAT IS THE SOVEREIGN RIGHT TO TAXATION?

Recently, the BJP-led government has decided to **withdraw the retrospective taxation amendment** in the I-T Act introduced in March 2012.

- The government has stressed the need to establish its “**Sovereign Right to Taxation**” by scrapping the retrospective levy.

‘Sovereignty’ mean?

- The word sovereignty comes from the Latin word ‘**superanus**’, and is traditionally understood to mean “**supreme power**”.
- The noted legal scholar John Salmond in his book Jurisprudence (1902) defines **sovereign or supreme power** as that “**which is absolute and uncontrolled within its own sphere**”.
- An act of sovereign power is one which **cannot be prevented or annulled by any other power** recognised by the constitution of the state.

Sovereign Right to Taxation in India?

- The Constitution of India gives the government the **right to levy taxes on individuals and organisations**.
 - It also makes it clear that **no one has the right to levy or charge taxes** except by the authority of law.
- Any tax being charged has to be **backed by a law passed** by the legislature or Parliament.

- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation defines tax as a **pecuniary burden laid upon individuals or property owners** to support the government.
- It provides that tax is **not a voluntary payment or donation**, but an **enforced contribution, exacted pursuant to legislative authority**.
- Taxes in India come under a **three-tier system** based on the **Central, State and local governments**, and the **Seventh Schedule of the Constitution** puts separate heads of taxation under the Union and State list.
- There is **no separate head under the Concurrent list**, meaning Union and the States have no concurrent power of taxation, as per the document.

Implication of Retrospective Tax ban on Sovereign Right to Taxation

- The government has assured that the **amendment to retrospective income-tax law will not dilute** India's sovereign right to tax.
- The amendment was made after the apex court in 2012 gave a verdict that **gains arising from indirect transfer of Indian assets were not taxable** under the extant provisions of the Income Tax Act.
- The idea behind the banning Retrospective Tax, a **sovereign government has right to tax**, but to apply it in retrospect has created a lot of discontentment.

1.6 PM MODI LAUNCHES VEHICLE SCRAPPAGE POLICY, SAYS IT WILL PROMOTE A CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Recently, the Prime Minister has launched the **Vehicle Scrappage Policy** at the **Investors Summit in Gujarat**.

Vehicle Scrappage Policy

- India is committed to provide **global standard safety and quality to its citizens** and this thinking is behind the transition from **BS4 to BS6**.
- The government is taking continuous **steps to make Indian Industry sustainable and productive** for speeding the process of Aatmanirbhar Bharat.
- India had to import 23,000 crore worth of scrap steel during 2020 as **India's scrapping is not productive** and **India is not able to recover energy and rare earth metals**.
- When it comes to vehicles which are **older than 20 years, India is home to 2.1 crore** such vehicles.

- **Karnataka** has the highest number (39.4 lakh) in the country which is followed by **Delhi** (36.1 lakh), **Uttar Pradesh** (26.2 lakh), **Kerala** (20.6 lakh), **Tamil Nadu** (15.9 lakh) and **Punjab** (15.3 lakh).

Features of Vehicle Scrappage Policy

- The **policy implementation will begin with heavy commercial vehicles**, which will need to undergo mandatory fitness tests starting April 1, 2023.
 - **All other vehicles, including private ones**, will be included in the mandatory fitness test criteria from June 1, 2024, in a phased manner.
- The policy aims to **scrap old, unfit and polluting vehicles** by creating an infrastructure for automated testing of vehicles that have completed the registration period.
- As per law, a registration certificate for a **passenger vehicle is valid for 15 years from date of issue**. For a **commercial vehicle**, it is valid for a **period of 10 years**.
 - The **scrappage policy will come into effect** after the expiry of this 10 or 15 year period.
- A **valid fitness certificate will be necessary** for renewal of registration certificates after 15 years.
 - The renewed certificate will be **issued for a period of 5 years** in case of private vehicles.
- Unfit vehicles will be **scrapped scientifically** which will ensure that registered vehicle scrapping facilities all over the country are technology driven and transparent.
- The term '**unfit**' vehicles include those:
 - Who fail to qualify a fitness test;
 - Who have been damaged due to fire, riot, natural disaster, accident or any other calamity;
 - Declared obsolete or beyond repair; and
 - Vehicles which have outlived their utility

Disincentives for holding old vehicles

- Holding on to vehicles older than 15 years will become an **expensive affair for owners as cost for renewal of fitness certificate might go up** by 62 times for commercial vehicles and by 8 times for private vehicles.
- The states will **impose green tax over and above the road tax** that every vehicle owner needs to pay.

Benefits to Consumers of Vehicle Scrappage Policy

- The first advantage will be that a **certificate will be given on scrapping the old vehicle**.
 - Whoever has this **certificate will not have to pay any money for registration** on the purchase of a new vehicle and he will also be given some exemption in road tax.
- The second benefit will be that the **maintenance cost, repair cost, fuel efficiency of the old vehicle will also be saved** in this.
- The third benefit is directly related to life because there will be some **relief from the high risk of road accidents due to old vehicles and old technology**.
- The fourth benefit is that it will **reduce the harmful impact of pollution** on our health.

Significance of Vehicle Scrappage Policy

- The vehicle scrapping will help **phase out unfit and polluting vehicles** in an environment friendly manner.
- Its objective is to **create a viable circular economy and bring value for all stakeholders** while being environmentally responsible.
- It is expected to **give a new identity to the auto sector** and to the mobility of New India.
- It will play a **big role in the modernization of the vehicular population** in the country, removing unfit vehicles from the roads in a scientific manner.
- The new scrapping policy is an **important link in the circular economy** and in the waste to wealth campaign.
- The policy uses the principle of **Reuse, Recycle and Recovery** to promote the country's self-reliance in the auto sector and in the metal sector.

1.7 GOVT TO OFFER INCENTIVES TO BOOST EXPORTS, NOTIFIES RoDTEP RATES

Recently, the Centre has notified guideline and rules of **Remission of Duties and Taxes on Exported Products (RoDTEP) Scheme**.

RoDTEP Scheme?

- It is a new scheme that is applicable with effect from January 1st, 2021, formed to **replace the existing MEIS (Merchandise Exports from India Scheme)**.
- The rebate will be **issued in the form of a transferable duty credit/ electronic scrip (e-scrip)** which will be maintained in an electronic ledger by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC).

- It is to be **implemented by Customs** through a simplified IT System.

Features of RoDTEP Scheme

- **Refund of the previously non-refundable duties and taxes:** Mandi tax, VAT, Coal cess, Central Excise duty on fuel etc. will now be refunded under this particular scheme.
 - All the items under the MEIS and the RoSTCL (Rebate of State and Central Taxes and Levies) are now under the purview of the RoDTEP Scheme.
- **Automated system of credit:** The refund will be issued in the form of transferable electronic scrips.
 - These duty credits will be maintained and tracked through an electronic ledger.
- **Quick verification through digitisation:** Through the introduction of the digital platform, the clearance happens at a much faster rate.
 - Verification of the records of the exporters will be done with the help of an IT-based risk management system to ensure speed and accuracy of transaction processing.
- **Multi-sector scheme:** Under RoDTEP, all sectors, including the textiles sector, are covered, so as to ensure uniformity across all areas.
 - The Employment Oriented Sectors like Marine, Agriculture, Leather, Gems & Jewellery etc. are covered under the Scheme.

Objectives of RoDTEP Scheme

- **Duties/ taxes/ levies, at the Central, State & local level, borne on the exported product**, including prior stage cumulative indirect taxes on goods & services used in production of the exported product, and
- Such **indirect Duties/ taxes/ levies** in respect of distribution of exported products.
- The Scheme **shall not be available** in respect of duties and taxes already exempted or remitted or credited.
- The **determination of ceiling rates** under the Scheme will be done by a Committee in the Department of Revenue/Drawback Division with suitable representation of the DoC/DGFT.
- The Scheme will **operate in a Budgetary framework** for each financial year and necessary calibrations and revisions shall be made to the Scheme benefits.

Eligibility to obtain benefits of the RoDTEP Scheme

- All sectors, including the **textiles sector**, may enjoy the benefits of the RoDTEP Scheme. **Labor-intensive sectors** that enjoy benefits under the MEIS Scheme will be given a priority.
- **Manufacturer exporters and merchant exporters (traders)** are both eligible for the benefits of this scheme.
- There is **no particular turnover threshold** to claim the RoDTEP.
- Re-exported products are **not eligible** under this scheme.
- To be eligible to avail the benefits of this scheme, the **exported products need to have the country of origin as India**.
- **Special Economic Zone Units and Export Oriented Units** are also eligible to claim the benefits under this scheme.
- Where goods have been **exported via courier through e-commerce platforms**, RoDTEP scheme applies to them as well.

Significance of RoDTEP Scheme

- The scheme for zero rating of exports will **boost India's exports & competitiveness in the global markets** and the rates of RoDTEP will cover 8555 tariff lines.
- The export centric industries are being reformed and introduced to **better mechanisms so as to increase their competitiveness, boost exports, generate employment** and contribute to the overall economy.
- It is going to give a **boost to Indian exports by providing a level playing field** to domestic industry abroad.
- Its support will be **available to eligible exporters** at a notified rate as a percentage of **Freight On Board (FOB)** value.

1.8 RESERVE BANK OF INDIA INTRODUCES THE FINANCIAL INCLUSION INDEX

Recently, the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** has introduced the **Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index)** to capture the extent of financial inclusion in the country.

Financial Inclusion Index

- It is an **annual publication** of Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

- It captures information on various aspects of financial inclusion in a **single value ranging between 0 and 100**, where 0 represents complete financial exclusion and 100 indicates full financial inclusion.
- It comprises **three broad parameters** i.e. **Access (35%), Usage (45%), and Quality (20%)**, with each of these consisting of various dimensions computed based on a number of indicators.
- It has been **constructed without any 'base year'** and it **reflects cumulative efforts of all stakeholders** over the years towards financial inclusion.

Highlights of Financial Inclusion Index

- The **annual FI-Index** for the period **ending March 2021 is 53.9** as against 43.4 for the period ending March 2017.
- There has been a **very good improvement of 10.5 points** in the FI Index between 2017 and 2021 because this was the period when the government and RBI gave a big push to financial inclusion.

Significance of Financial Inclusion Index

- It has a unique feature of the **quality parameter**, which captures the **quality aspect of financial inclusion as reflected by financial literacy, consumer protection, and inequalities and deficiencies in services**.
- It has been conceptualized as a **comprehensive index** incorporating details of banking, investments, insurance, postal, and the pension sector.
- It is responsive to **ease of access, availability and usage of services, and quality of services**, comprising 97 indicators in all.

1.9 WHY CRED MINT IS NOTHING NEW FOR INDIA

Recently, the **Fintech platform CRED** has announced the launch of a **peer-to-peer (P2P) lending** feature called **CRED Mint**.

CRED Mint?

- It is a service that will **allow the company's users to lend money to other users** and **make a 9% interest per annum** on the amounts they give out as loan.
- It is the **company's very first initiative in this market** and also the **first community-driven product** that enables the members to earn interest on idle money.

- The Fintech platform partnered with **Liquiloans**, an RBI-registered P2P non-banking financial company (NBFC) to launch CRED Mint.

Working of CRED Mint

- In order to access CRED Mint, be it if a person is an existing user of CRED or if he/she is new to the fold, the person **need to register for early access to the feature**.
- After registration, the person will be able to **make his/her investments in CRED Mint**.
- The investments that are made in CRED Mint will be **lent out through CRED Cash**, which is a lending product created specifically for CRED members.
- It was created in **partnership with licensed banks and NBFCs**.
- The invested money will then be **routed directly to an escrow account** that is held by the CRED's NBFC partner, Liquiloans.
- The members of CRED Mint can **invest anywhere between Rs. 100,000 to Rs. 1,000,000** which is commission-free.

Significance of CRED Mint

- It advertises itself as being **completely transparent** while allowing the user to track their investments' progress in real-time.
- It also suggests that the **members can quickly and easily withdraw** their cash at any time they want.
- This can be done **either partially or fully with no penalty**, while still retaining the interest that you accumulated for the period that it was invested.
- The **entire withdrawal process will be entirely online** and the money will be returned to the investors within the working day, according to the company.

P2P lending?

- It enables individuals to **obtain loans directly from other individuals**, cutting out the financial institution as the middleman.
- It is also known as "**social lending**" or "**crowd lending**".
- It is a form of **direct lending of money to individuals or businesses** without an official financial institution participating as an intermediary in the deal.

Working of P2P Lending

- All the transactions are carried out through a **specialized online platform**. The steps below describe the general P2P lending process:
 - A potential borrower interested in obtaining a loan **completes an online application** on the peer-to-peer lending platform.
 - The platform **assesses the application and determines the risk and credit rating** of the applicant. Then, the applicant is assigned with the appropriate interest rate.
 - When the application is approved, the **applicant receives the available options from the investors** based on his credit rating and assigned interest rates.
 - The applicant can **evaluate the suggested options** and choose one of them.
 - The applicant is responsible for **paying periodic (usually monthly) interest payments** and repaying the principal amount at maturity.

Advantages of P2P Lending

- Peer-to-peer lending provides some significant advantages to both borrowers and lenders:
 - **Higher returns to the investors:** P2P lending generally provides higher returns to the investors relative to other types of investments.
 - **More accessible source of funding:** For some borrowers, peer-to-peer lending is a more accessible source of funding than conventional loans from financial institutions. This may be caused by the low credit rating of the borrower or atypical purpose of the loan.
 - **Lower interest rates:** P2P loans usually come with lower interest rates because of the greater competition between lenders and lower origination fees.

Concerns associated with P2P Lending

- **Credit risk:** Peer-to-peer loans are exposed to high credit risks. Many borrowers who apply for P2P loans possess low credit ratings that do not allow them to obtain a conventional loan from a bank. Therefore, a lender should be aware of the default probability of his/her counterparty.
- **No insurance/government protection:** The government does not provide insurance or any form of protection to the lenders in case of the borrower's default.

- **Legislation:** Some jurisdictions do not allow peer-to-peer lending or require the companies that provide such services to comply with investment regulations. Therefore, peer-to-peer lending may not be available to some borrowers or lenders.

1.10 FM LAUNCHES THE UBHARTE SITAARE FUND TO SUPPORT INDIA'S FUTURE EXPORT CHAMPIONS

Recently, the Union Minister of Finance has launched the **UbharteSitaare Alternative Investment Fund**.

UbharteSitaare Alternative Investment Fund

- It is co-sponsored by **India Exim Bank** and **SIDBI** with a contribution of **₹ 40 crore each** has been successfully registered with SEBI.
- The **corpus of the Fund is ₹ 250 crore** with a green shoe option of ₹ 250 crore.
- The Fund would **invest by way of equity, and equity like products in export-oriented units**, both in the manufacturing and services sectors, across the country.

Purpose of UbharteSitaare Alternative Investment Fund

- Its objective is to **identify and invest in small and mid-size ventures** in manufacturing and service industries with good export potential.
- It would **make investments in export-oriented small and mid-sized companies** by way of equity and equity-like products, and thereby help script a new paradigm of growth in exports.
- It would play a **catalytic role** in contributing to the growth of the identified companies.
- It would also have **downstream benefits** such as growth and diversification of India's exports, impetus to brand India, and employment generation.

Identification of companies under UbharteSitaare Fund

- Under the scheme, **an identified company is supported even if it is currently underperforming** or may be unable to tap its latent potential to grow.
- The programme **diagnoses such challenges and provides support through a mix of structured support** covering equity, debt and technical assistance.
- Eligible companies can be **supported by both financial and advisory services** by way of equity / equity-like instruments, term loans for modernisation, technology or capacity upgradation.

- Companies will be **selected for support based on their unique value proposition** in technology, products or processes that match global requirements.

Eligible Companies under UkharteSitaare Alternative Investment Fund

- Companies with a **unique value proposition in technology, products or processes** which match international requirements
- **Fundamentally strong companies** with acceptable financials, and outward orientation.
- Small and mid-sized companies with an **ability to penetrate global markets** and have an “annual turnover of up to approximately ₹500 crore.
- Companies that have a **good business model, strong management capabilities** and a focus on product quality.

1.11 FINANCE MINISTER LAUNCHES THE NATIONAL MONETISATION PIPELINE

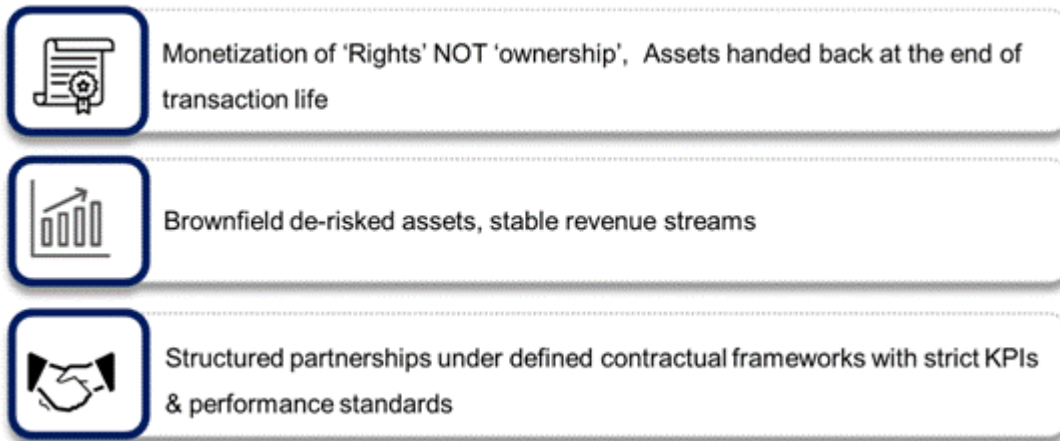
Recently, the Union Minister for Finance has launched the asset monetisation pipeline of Central ministries and public sector entities: ‘**National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP Volumes 1 & 2)**’.

National Monetisation Pipeline

- The Union Budget 2021-22 has identified **monetisation of operating public infrastructure assets** as a key means for sustainable infrastructure financing.
- The Budget provided for preparation of a ‘**National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP)**’ of potential brownfield infrastructure assets.
- The pipeline has been **developed by NITI Aayog**, in consultation with infrastructure line ministries, based on the mandate for ‘**Asset Monetisation**’
- It aims to provide a **medium term roadmap of the programme for public asset owners**; along with visibility on potential assets to private sector.
- NMP estimates **aggregate monetisation potential of Rs 6.0 lakh crores** through core assets of the Central Government, over a four-year period, from **FY 2022 to FY 2025**.
- The Asset Monetisation programme is based on the **vision of universal access to high-quality and affordable infrastructure** to the common citizen of India.

Features of National Monetisation Pipeline

- The pipeline has been prepared **based on inputs and consultations from respective line ministries and departments**, along with the assessment of total asset base available therein.
- The **monetization through disinvestment** and **monetization of non-core assets** have **not** been included in the NMP.
 - Currently, **only assets of central government line ministries and CPSEs in infrastructure sectors** have been included.
- The **framework for monetisation of core asset monetisation** has three key imperatives:



- It includes selection of **de-risked and brownfield assets with stable revenue generation profile** with the overall transaction structured around revenue rights.
- The primary ownership of the assets under these structures continues to be with the Government with the **framework envisaging hand back of assets to the public authority** at the end of transaction life.

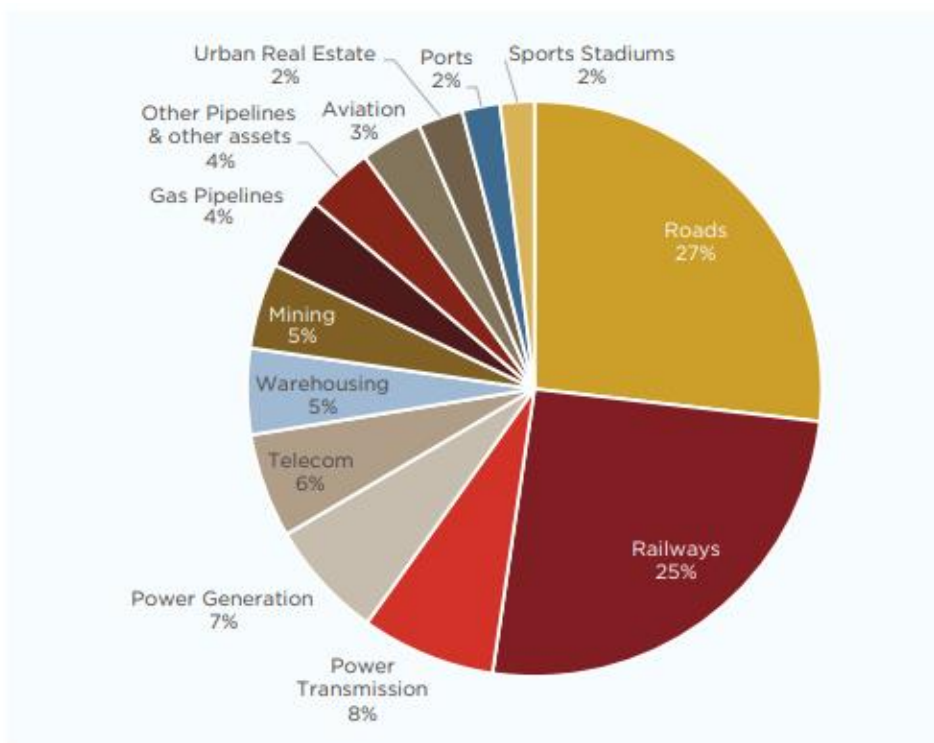
Significance of National Monetisation Pipeline

- Its strategic objective is to **unlock the value of investments in brownfield public sector assets** by tapping institutional and long-term patient capital.
- The NMP is **envisaged to serve as a medium-term roadmap for identifying potential monetisation-** ready projects, across various infrastructure sectors.
- The NMP is aimed at **creating a systematic and transparent mechanism for public authorities** to monitor the performance of the initiative and for investors to plan their future activities.

- The NMP is a **culmination of insights, feedback and experiences consolidated through multi-stakeholder** consultations undertaken by NITI Aayog, Ministry of Finance and line ministries.

Potential of National Monetisation Pipeline

- The period for NMP has been decided so as to be **co-terminus with balance period under National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP)**.
- The aggregate asset pipeline under NMP over the **four-year period, FY 2022-2025**, is indicatively valued at Rs 6.0 lakh crore.
- The estimated value corresponds to **~14% of the proposed outlay for Centre under NIP** (Rs 43 lakh crore).
 - It includes more than **12 line ministries and more than 20 asset classes**.
- The sectors included are **roads, ports, airports, railways, warehousing, gas & product pipeline, power generation and transmission, mining, telecom, stadium, hospitality and housing**.
- The **top 5 sectors (by estimated value) capture ~83%** of the aggregate pipeline value.
 - These top 5 sectors include **Roads (27%)** followed by **Railways (25%), Power (15%), oil & gas pipelines (8%)** and **Telecom (6%)**.



- The assets and transactions identified under the NMP are expected to be **rolled out through a range of instruments.**
- It includes **direct contractual instruments** such as public private partnership concessions and capital market instruments such as Infrastructure Investment Trusts (InvIT) among others.

1.12 Government cautions stakeholders as 348 companies fail to meet requisite criteria for declaration as Nidhi company under Companies Act 2013 and Nidhi Rules 2014

Recently, the Centre has cautioned people regarding **348 companies** that failed to meet the **requisite criteria for declaration as a Nidhi company**, under Companies Act 2013 and Nidhi Rules 2014.

Nidhi Company?

- It is a company that is recognised under **section 406 of the Companies Act, 2013** read with **Nidhi Rules 2014.**
- Under section 406 of the Companies Act, 2013, and amended Nidhi Rules of 2014, companies incorporated as **'Nidhi'** need to apply to the Central government in form NDH-4.

- Its core functions are **borrowing and lending money among its members** and **fall under the non-banking Indian finance sector**.
- It is a company that has been incorporated with the express **purpose of cultivating the habit of thrift and savings** among its members.
- They are known by different names such as **Benefit Funds, Permanent Fund, Mutual Benefit Funds, or Mutual Benefit Company**.

Eligibility Conditions for declaring a Nidhi Company

- To establish a Nidhi Company, the following criteria must be met:
 - The company must have the suffix “**Nidhi Limited**” in its name
 - The company must be a **Public Company**.
 - **Minor, Body Corporate and a Trust** cannot be admitted as members to Nidhi.
 - The minimum paid-up share capital must be **Rs. 5 lakh**.
 - The company cannot issue **preference shares**, in the case where such shares have been issued by the company prior to the commencement of the Act, the same shall be redeemed.
 - The primary objective of the company must be to **inculcate the habit of savings** in its members.

Post Incorporation Requirements of a Nidhi Company

- Within one year of incorporation, a Nidhi company must satisfy the following conditions:
 - The **minimum number of members** must be 200.
 - The **Net owned funds** must be Rs. 10 lakhs.
 - Net owned funds is the aggregate of paid-up capital and free reserves reduced by the accumulated and intangible assets as appearing in the last balance sheet.
 - The net owned funds and the deposits shall be in a **ratio not exceeding 1: 20** that is Net Owned Funds: Deposits = 1:20.
 - Unencumbered term deposits **should be not less than 10%** of the outstanding deposits as specified in Rule 14 of Nidhi Rules 2014.

Restrictions on Nidhi Companies

- As per Rule 6 of Nidhi rules 2014, a Nidhi Company **cannot perform** the following activities:

- Conduct the business of chit fund, leasing finance, and hire purchase. It cannot acquire securities issued by a body corporate.
- Issue preference shares, debentures, or any debt instrument by any name or in any form whatsoever.
- Open any current account with its members.
- Make any acquisitions or arrangements or concessions until the same is adopted in the General Meeting by a special resolution and is approved by the Regional Director.
- Perform any business other than borrowing/ lending in its own name.
- Lend to or accept funds from anyone other than its members.
- Lend to or accept funds from body corporate.
- Enter into any partnership arrangement in their borrowing or lending operation.
- Act of publicity for seeking any deposits in any form.
- Pledge any of its assets lodged by its members as security.
- Pay any brokerage or incentive for granting loans or deployment of funds or mobilise deposits from its members.

1.13 FOUR-TIER STRUCTURE PROPOSED FOR URBAN CO-OPERATIVE BANKS (UCBS) IS IN THE NEWS?

Recently, the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) expert **committee on urban co-operative banks (UCBs)** has suggested a **four-tiered structure to regulate them**, based on size of deposits.

- The committee is headed by former **RBI Deputy Governor NS Vishwanathan**.

Key suggestions by RBI Committee

Umbrella Organisation

- The committee has proposed setting up an **umbrella organisation (UO)** to oversee co-operative banks.
- The UO should be **financially strong** and be well governed by a **professional board and senior management**, both of which are fit and proper.
- The Committee preferred **smaller banks acquiring scale via the network of the UO**, which is one of the successful models of a strong financial cooperative system globally.
- The **minimum capital for the UO should be Rs 300 crore with CRAR** and regulatory framework akin to the largest segment of NBFCs.

Increase in UCB branches

- It also suggested that the **UCBs should be allowed to open more branches** if they meet all regulatory requirements.

Merger of UCBs

- The panel said the **RBI should not hesitate to use the route of mandatory merger** to resolve UCBs that do not meet the prudential requirements.

Separate ceilings for loans

- The committee also recommended that the **limit for home loans, gold loans and unsecured loans** should be fixed as per the bank category.
- The general banking rules should be **applicable to large urban cooperative banks** which includes capital raising and all other conditions.

Capital to Risk-Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR)

- It has suggested that the **minimum Capital to Risk-Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR)** for them could vary from 9 per cent to 15 per cent and for Tier-4 UCBs the Basel III prescribed norms.

Supervisory Action Framework (SAF)

- It should follow a **twin-indicator approach** i.e. it should consider only asset quality and capital measured through NNPA and CRAR instead of triple indicators at present.
- The objective of the SAF should be to find a **time-bound remedy to the financial stress** of a bank.
- If a **UCB remains under more stringent stages of SAF** for a prolonged period, it may have an adverse effect on its operations and may further erode its financial position.

About four-tier structure of UCBs

- According to the committee, based on the cooperativeness' of the banks, **availability of capital and other factors**, UCBs may be categorized into four tiers for regulatory purposes:

- **Tier 1** with all unit UCBs and salary earner's UCBs (irrespective of deposit size) and all other UCBs having deposits up to Rs 100 crore;
- **Tier 2** with UCBs of deposits between Rs 100 crore and Rs 1,000 crore;
- **Tier 3** with UCBs of deposits between Rs 1,000 crore and Rs 10,000 crore; and
- **Tier 4** with UCBs of deposits more than Rs 10,000 crore

What is Urban Cooperative Bank (UCB)?

- Urban Co-operative Banks (UCBs) occupies an important place among the **Non-Agricultural Credit Society**.
- The UCBs **provide various kinds of Banking facilities** like Commercial and Nationalized Bank to their members and customers.
- The **main objectives** of the UCBs are:
 - To attract deposits from members as well as non-members.
 - To advance loan to Members.
 - To act as the age for the joint purchase of domestic and other requirements of the members.
 - To undertake collection of bills, accepted or endorsed by member.
 - To arrange for the safe custody of valuable documents of members.
 - To provide other facilities as provided by commercial banks.
- The main functions of the urban co-operative banks are to **accept deposits** from the members and non-members.
- In September 2020, the Parliament passed amendments to the Banking Regulation Act and **brought co-operative banks under the RBI's supervision**.
- In the event of failure of UCBs, **deposits with them are covered by the Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation of India** up to a sum of ₹1 lakh per depositor.

1.14 INTERNATIONAL TRADE FINANCING SERVICES PLATFORM AT GIFT IFSC IS IN THE NEWS?

Recently, the **International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA)** has invited application from eligible entities, which are desirous of setting up and operating the **International Trade Financing Services (ITFS) Platform**, to apply in the prescribed format.

What is International Trade Financing Services Platform?

- It would be an **electronic platform for facilitating the trade finance requirements** of exporters and importers by providing access to multiple financiers.
- The ITFS platform will **function from GIFT IFSC** for providing trade financing services.

Framework for setting ITFS Platform

- The framework shall **apply to the entities seeking permission to set up ITFS** under this framework.
- The operations on ITFS shall be conducted only in a **freely convertible foreign currency**.
- The ITFS **shall not assume any credit risk** on the transactions carried out on its platform.
- An entity desirous of **setting up and operating the ITFS in an IFSC** shall fulfil the following criteria:
 - The parent entity or the promoters/promoter groups of the company applying to set up a company as ITFS in an IFSC should have a **minimum net worth of USD 1 million**.
 - The company proposed to be set up as ITFS shall have **minimum paid up equity capital of USD 0.2 million** or equivalent in any other freely convertible currency.
 - The Parent or the promoters/promoter groups of such company should be **domiciled and regulated or registered in jurisdiction not identified in the public statement of Financial Action Task Force as 'High Risk Jurisdictions'** subject to a 'Call for Action'.
 - **Exporters, Importers, Financiers and Insurance/Credit Guarantee Institutions** and other eligible entities will be the direct participants in the ITFS.

Significance of Framework for setting ITFS Platform

- It will enable **Exporters and Importers to avail various types of trade finance facilities** at competitive terms, for their international trade transactions through a dedicated electronic platform.
- It will help in their **ability to convert their trade receivables into liquid funds** and to obtain short term funding.
- It will also provide an **opportunity to the participants to avail trade finance facilities** for trade transactions such as:
 - Export Invoice Trade Financing,
 - Reverse Trade Financing
 - Bill discounting under Letter of Credit,
 - Supply Chain Finance for Exporters,
 - Export Credit (Packing Credit),
 - Insurance/ Credit Guarantee,

- Factoring and any other eligible product
- It will play an instrumental role in **arranging credit for exporters & importers from global institutions** through Factoring, Forfaiting and other trade financing services at competitive cost.
- It is expected to be **leveraged by exporters and importers across the world** for availing trade finance services, thereby making GIFT IFSC a preferred location for international trade financing.

About International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA)

- It has been established as a **unified regulator** to develop and regulate financial products, financial services, and financial institutions in the IFSCs in India.
- It has been established in April 2020 under the **International Financial Services Centres Authority Act, 2019**.
- It is headquartered at **GIFT City, Gandhinagar in Gujarat**.
- It is the **maiden international financial services centre** in India.
- Its primary objective is to **develop a strong global connect and focus on the needs** of the Indian economy.
- It will serve as an **international financial platform for the entire region** and the global economy as a whole.
- The **strategic objectives** of IFSCA are as follows:
 - To position the IFSC as a leading internationally recognized centre with trusted business and tax regulation, and judicial & dispute resolution system.
 - To become a gateway for global capital flows into and out of India.
 - To emerge as a regional/global hub for international financial services.

1.15 FINANCE MINISTER UNVEILS 4TH PUBLIC SECTOR BANK REFORMS AGENDA, EASE 4.0 AGENDA

Recently, the Union Minister of Finance has unveiled the fourth edition of the **Public Sector Bank (PSB) Reforms Agenda 'EASE 4.0'** for 2021-22 - tech-enabled, simplified, and collaborative banking.

Genesis

- The PSB reforms agenda - EASE was launched based on the recommendations made by **PSB Whole Time Directors (WTDs)** and senior executives in PSB Manthan in 2017.

- It encapsulates a **synergistic approach to ensure prudent and clean lending**, better customer service, simplified and enhanced credit, and robust governance and HR practices.
- The Reforms Agenda is pursued through a **unique Reforms Index** that enabled objective assessment of progress on all key areas in PSBs.
- The **first edition** of the EASE program pertaining to FY19 aimed at **laying the foundation for themes** such as Customer Responsiveness.
- The **second edition** of the EASE program for **CLEAN and SMART banking** was launched for FY20 to further build on the foundation of EASE 1.0.
- The **third edition** of the EASE reforms (EASE 3.0) was launched in FY21 to help catalyze accelerated **adoption of customer-centric digital transformation initiatives across PSBs**.

Highlights of EASE 4.0

- Public Sector Banks have reported **healthy profits** and have **accelerated on technology-driven reforms**.
- These banks have **reported a profit of Rs. 31,817 crore** in FY21 as compared to a loss of Rs. 26,016 crore in FY20.
 - It is the **first year** when PSBs have reported profit after five years of losses.
- The **total gross non-performing assets stood at Rs. 6.16 lakh crore** as of March 2021 i.e. a reduction of Rs. 62,000 crore from March 2020 levels.
- The EASE 4.0 aims to further the agenda of **customer-centric digital transformation** and deeply embed digital and data into PSBs' ways of working.
- The **two new themes** have been introduced to deliver on these objectives:
 - **New Age 24x7 banking with resilient technology** has been introduced to ensure uninterrupted availability of banking services by ensuring 24X7 availability of select banking channels.
 - **Collaborative banking for synergistic outcomes** aims to maximise synergies through collaboration between PSBs and with broader financial services ecosystem such as NBFCs for the coordinated handling of co-originated loans.

Awards under EASE 3.0

- **State Bank of India, Bank of Baroda and Union Bank of India** have won the awards for best performing banks for PSB Reforms EASE 3.0 based on the EASE index.
- **Indian Bank** won the award for the best improvement from the baseline performance.
- **SBI, BoB, Union Bank of India, Punjab National Bank and Canara Bank** won the top awards in different themes of the PSB Reforms Agenda EASE 3.0.

Challenges faced by Public Sector Bank (PSB)

- **Losses in Rural Branches:** Most of the rural branches are running at a loss because of high overheads and prevalence of the barter system in most parts of rural India.
- **Large Over-Dues:** The small branches of commercial banks are now faced with a new problem—a large amount of overdue advances to farmers.
- **Non-Performing Assets:** The commercial banks at present do not have any machinery to ensure that their loans and advances are, in fact, going into productive use in the larger public interest.
- **Advance to Priority Sector:** The slow progress is partly attributable to the fact that the bank officials from top to bottom could not accept nationalisation gracefully, i.e. diversion of a certain portion of resources to the top priority and hitherto neglected sectors.
- **Gap between Promise and Performance:** One major weakness of the nationalised banking system in India is its failure to sustain the desired credit pattern and fill in credit gaps in different sectors.

1.16 HOW NEW SEBI REGULATIONS BENEFIT LISTED COMPANY EMPLOYEES

Recently, the **Securities and Exchange Board of India** has approved the merger of the **SEBI (Share Based Employee Benefits) Regulations, 2014** and the **SEBI (Issue of Sweat Equity) Regulations, 2002** into the **SEBI (Share Based Employee Benefits and Sweat Equity) Regulations, 2021**.

Changes brought by SEBI

- The companies will now be allowed to **provide share-based employee benefits to employees**, who are exclusively working for such a company or any of its group companies including a subsidiary or an associate.
- Under the earlier regulations, **only permanent employees of the company** and its holding and subsidiary companies were eligible for share-based benefits.

- The new regulations broaden this by **deleting the word “permanent”** and also permitting employees of group/associate companies.
- The experts have said that this will help **companies to better use share-based employee benefits** for retaining employees for longer period.
- It will **imbibe a sense of responsibility and ownership** in the employee that will push him/her to work for the growth of the company.

Applicability of New Rules

- The new rules will be **applicable only to listed companies** as these have been framed by SEBI, which only regulates listed companies.
- **For unlisted companies**, any change needed will have to be brought into the **Companies Act 2013**, by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

Important Changes brought by SEBI

- The regulations have dispensed with the **requirement of a minimum vesting period and lock-in period (minimum 1 year)** for all share benefit schemes.
 - It aims to **provide immediate relief to an employee or his/her family** in instances of permanent incapacity or death.
- The experts feel this will **allow companies to provide instant relief to bereaved family members** who otherwise would have had to wait.
- The new regulations have **extended the time period for appropriating the unappropriated inventory of shares** held by the trust from the existing one year to two years, subject to the approval of the Compensation Committee/ Nomination and Remuneration Committee.
 - It is expected to **provide relief to companies** that could not grant or dispose of such excess inventory due to adverse market conditions.
- The regulations now **permit companies to transfer excess shares or monies** held by a trust upon its winding up, to other share-based employee benefit schemes, subject to approval of the shareholders for such transfer.
 - It will give **more clarity to companies to manage their assets and financial resources** of the trust in a more efficient and organised manner.
- The regulations will now **provide companies with flexibility in switching administration of their schemes** from the trust route to the direct route, or vice versa, with the approval of the shareholders.

- The companies that opted for any of these routes had to **carry on with that route until the conclusion of the scheme.**

Issuance of Sweat Equity

- Sweat equity shares will be **allowed to be issued for providing the know-how or making available rights** in the nature of intellectual property rights or value additions.
- As per Section 2(88) of the Companies Act, 2013 “**sweat equity shares**” means such equity shares as are issued by a company to its directors or employees at a discount or for consideration, other than cash, for providing their know-how or making available rights in the nature of intellectual property rights or value additions, by whatever name called.
- The regulations have aligned the **pricing and the lock-in requirements of the sweat equity shares** with the preferential issue norms as provided in the SEBI (Issue of Capital and Disclosure Requirements) Regulations, 2018.
- The **maximum yearly limit of sweat equity shares** that can be issued by a company listed on the main board has been **prescribed at 15% of the existing paid-up equity share capital** within the overall limit, not exceeding 25% of the paid-up capital at any time.
- In case of companies listed on the **Innovators Growth Platform (IGP)**, the yearly limit will be 15% and overall limit will be 50% of the paid-up capital at any time.
 - It enhanced overall limit for **IGP will be applicable for 10 years** from the date of the company’s incorporation.
 - It will **benefit all new start-up companies** seeking listing on the IGP platform.

1.17 PM MODI EXPRESSES HAPPINESS OVER COMPLETION OF 7 YEARS OF PMJDY

Recently, the Prime Minister has expressed happiness on completion of seven years of **PM Jan Dhan Yojana.**

PM Jan Dhan Yojana

- It is a scheme launched by the government of India to provide **hassle free access to various financial services** in 2014.
- It is a **National Mission for Financial Inclusion** to ensure access to financial services such as a **basic savings & deposit accounts, remittance, credit, insurance, pension** in an affordable manner.

- Under the scheme, a **basic savings bank deposit (BSBD) account can be opened in any bank branch** or Business Correspondent (Bank Mitra) outlet, by persons not having any other account.

Features of PM Jan Dhan Yojana

- **One basic savings bank account** is opened for unbanked person.
- There is **no requirement to maintain any minimum balance** in PMJDY accounts.
- **Interest is earned** on the deposit in PMJDY accounts.
- **Rupay Debit card** is provided to PMJDY account holder.
- **Accident Insurance Cover of Rs.1 lakh** (enhanced to Rs. 2 lakh to new PMJDY accounts opened after 28.8.2018) is available with RuPay card issued to the PMJDY account holders.
- An **overdraft (OD) facility up to Rs. 10,000** to eligible account holders is available.
- **PMJDY accounts are eligible** for Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), Atal Pension Yojana (APY), Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency Bank (MUDRA) scheme.

Eligibility under PM Jan Dhan Yojana

- In order for individuals to open a PMJDY account, the below given criteria must be met:
 - The person must be **citizen of India**
 - The person should be **at least 10 years of age**
 - The person **should not have a bank account**

Significance of PM Jan Dhan Yojana

- It is aimed at **ensuring access to various financial services to the excluded sections** i.e. weaker sections & low income groups.
- It envisages **universal access to banking facilities with at least one basic banking account** for every household, financial literacy, access to credit, insurance and pension facility.
- It envisages **channeling all Government benefits (from Centre / State / Local Body) to the beneficiary's accounts** and pushing the Direct Benefits Transfer (DBT) scheme of the Union Government.

1.18 SMALL INDUSTRY DAY 2021: GOVERNMENT POLICIES TO PROMOTE SMALL INDUSTRIES

Recently, the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises has celebrated the **National Small Industry Day**.

National Small Industry Day

- It is an **annual celebration** that recognises the **value of small businesses** in our society.
- It is celebrated every year on **August 30**.
- It is observed with the goal of **encouraging small businesses and offering job opportunities** to the jobless.
- Its primary goal is to **emphasize the importance of small-scale enterprises** in creating work possibilities for individuals living in both rural and urban regions.

State of MSMEs in India

- India is home to **more than 6.3 crore MSMEs**, which have the ability and capability to **access international markets** and work as ancillaries to larger international firms.
- In terms of exports, the sector holds high potential in various sub-sectors such as **textiles, leather & leather goods, pharmaceuticals, automotive, gems & Jewellery** etc. with overall contribution of 45 percent.

MSMEs Reforms by Government of India

- **Revision of MSME definition:** In line with Government of India's top focus on energizing MSMEs in the country, Government of India approved the upward revision of MSME definition on 1st June 2020 under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Package.
 - The Government revised the MSME classification by inserting composite criteria of both investment and annual turnover.
- **Udyam Registration:** Udyam is an online and simplified procedure of filing of registration which enables MSMEs to obtain registration without any documentation and fees.
 - It is a globally benchmarked process and a revolutionary step towards Ease of Doing Business.
 - The Ministry of MSME has also commenced API integration of Udyam Registration portal with GeM so that MSMEs can participate in Government procurement easily.
- **Champions Portal:** CHAMPIONS is an online platform to help and handhold the MSMEs specially in this difficult time.

- It is an ICT based technology system aimed at making the smaller units big by solving their grievances, encouraging, supporting, helping and handholding throughout the business lifecycle.
- The platform facilitates a single window solution for all needs of MSMEs.
- **National SC-ST Hub (NSSH):** National SC-ST Hub has been launched to promote entrepreneurship culture in the SC-ST community and fulfill the 4% procurement target mentioned in the Public Procurement Policy order, 2018
 - To boost entrepreneurship among SC/ST population and for maximum on-ground penetration, several interventions have been undertaken to cater to the challenge of market linkages, finance facilitations, capacity building etc.
- **Self-Reliant India (SRI) Fund:** The scheme is expected to facilitate equity financing of Rs.50,000 crore in the MSME Sector.
 - The infusion of equity will provide an opportunity to get MSMEs listed in stock exchanges.
 - It will also facilitate MSMEs to scale-up their business & growth and will help creating more jobs in the MSME sector.
- **Procurement Policy:** For providing marketing support to MSEs, all Central Ministries/Government Departments and CPSEs are required to procure 25% of their annual requirements of goods and services from MSEs including 4% from MSEs owned by SC/ST and 3% from MSEs owned by women entrepreneurs under the Public Procurement Policy.
- **Establishment of Enterprise Development Centers (EDCs):** With a view to provide Information related to MSMEs at one place, Enterprise Development Centres (EDCs) have been conceptualized.
 - Till date Ministry of MSME has set up 102 EDCs across India.
- The aim of these centers is to build a network of entrepreneurial leaders by providing professional mentoring and handholding support services to existing as well as aspiring MSMEs with special focus on rural enterprises on continuous basis.

1.19 TWO MORE ENTITIES APPLY FOR SFB LICENCE

Recently, the Reserve Bank of India has received applications from two more entities under the “on-tap” small finance bank licensing guidelines of 2019.

- The **Cosmea Financial Holdings Pvt Ltd** and **Tally Solutions Pvt Ltd** have applied to the RBI for a small finance bank licence.

Small Finance Bank (SFB)?

- It was made public in India on September 16, 2015, after the **Reserve Bank of India approved to set up small financial institutions**, called **small finance banks**, as per the Union Budget of 2014-2015.
- It is a **specific segment of banking created by RBI** under the guidance of Government of India with an objective of **furthering financial inclusion**.
- It aims to **undertake basic banking activities to un-served and underserved sections** including small business units, small and marginal farmers, micro and small industries and unorganized entities.
- Like other commercial banks, these banks can **undertake all basic banking activities** including lending and taking deposits.

Features of Small Finance Bank (SFB)

- It is **mandatory** for Small Finance Banks to set up at least **25 percent of its branches** in the unbanked remote and rural areas.
- The SFBs require a **minimum capital requirement of ₹ 100 Cr.**
- The Small Finance Banks are **subjected to follow the rules and regulations** set by the RBI.
 - These rules include **maintenance of the CRR or cash reserve ratio**, and STR or statutory liquidity ratio.
- The Small Finance Banks can even take up activities like **distribution of mutual funds, insurance products, and pension products**, but only after approval from RBI.
- The SFBs can engage in **foreign exchange business** as per their customer's needs.

Products offered by Small Finance Banks (SFB)

- All Small Finance Banks deal with **basic lending and deposit activities**, like loans and deposits.
- **Deposits**- All Small Finance Banks provide Fixed and Recurring Deposits.
 - The interest rates charged by these banks on Fixed Deposit and Recurring Deposit are comparatively higher than that of regular banks.
- **Loans**- All Small Finance Banks deal with retail loan products like Personal, Housing, and Auto loans.
 - These Banks are required to extend 75% of their Adjusted Net profit for the priority sector.
 - In addition to that, 50% of the loans lent must be up to ₹ 25 Lakh.

- **Other Products-** Small Finance Banks deal in other products as well such as Distribution of Mutual Funds, Pension Products, Insurance Products, Foreign Exchange, Debit Cards, Savings and Current Account Deposits

Significance of Small Finance Bank (SFB)

- The small finance banks were set to **reach out to the unbanked population** in the remote and unprivileged areas.
- The SFBs are required to **focus their products more towards the priority sector**, which includes:
 - Facilitating funds to poor people for housing;
 - Lending for agriculture and allied activities; and
 - Funding to micro and small industries and weaker sections of the society

Guidelines for 'on tap' licensing of Small Finance Banks (SFB)

- **Minimum paid-up voting equity capital/ net worth** requirement shall be Rs.200 crore.
 - Payments Banks like Paytm an IndiaPost and Fino can apply for conversion into SFB after 5 years of operations if they are otherwise eligible as per these guidelines.
- **Licensing window will be open 'on-tap'**: The on-tap facility allows RBI to accept applications and grant licence for banks throughout the year.
 - This policy also allows aspirants to apply for universal bank licence any time, subject to fulfilling certain conditions.
- SFBs will have general **permission to open banking outlets** from the date of commencement of operations.
 - SFBs will be given **scheduled bank status** immediately upon commencement of operations.
- For Primary (Urban) Co-operative Banks (UCBs), aspiring to voluntarily transit into SFBs, the **initial requirement of net worth shall be at Rs.100 crores** that will have to be increased to Rs.200 crores within 5 years from the date of commencement of business.

2.1 NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar - NISAR

India participated in the **3rd Arctic Science Ministerial (ASM3) meeting**, jointly organised by **Iceland and Japan**, for discussing **research and cooperation in the Arctic**.

NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar:

- There are plans to launch **NISAR (NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar)** satellite, a joint ISRO-NASA mission early **2023**.
- It is aimed for global **measurement of land surface changes** using advanced **radar imaging**.
- NISAR is a joint Earth-Observation mission between ISRO and NASA for global observations over all land masses including **Polar cryosphere** and **Indian Ocean region**.
- It is a **dual band** (L-band and S-band) Radar imaging mission with capability of full polarimetric and interferometric modes of operation to observe minor changes in land, vegetation and cryosphere.
- **NASA** is developing **L-band SAR** and associated systems and **ISRO** is developing **S-band SAR**, spacecraft bus, the launch vehicle and associated launch services.
- Objectives of the mission: To improve understanding of the **impact of climate change** on Earth's changing Ecosystems, land and coastal processes, land deformations and Cryosphere.

2.2 EXPLAINED: WHAT IS NAUKA, THE MODULE RUSSIA SENT TO THE INTERNATIONAL SPACE STATION?

Recently, Russia's uncrewed **Nauka laboratory module** docked with the **International Space Station (ISS)** after an eight-day journey.

Nauka Module for ISS?

- It is the **biggest space laboratory** Russia has launched to date.
- The meaning of **Nauka** is "**science**" in Russian.
- It was launched from the **Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan** using a Proton rocket.
- It will serve as a **new science facility, docking port, and spacewalk airlock** for the future operations.

Purpose of Nauka Module

- It is bringing to the ISS another **oxygen generator, a spare bed, another toilet, and a robotic cargo crane** built by the European Space Agency (ESA).
- It will be **attached to the critical Zvezda module**, which provides all of the space station's life support systems and serves as the structural and functional centre of the **Russian Orbital Segment (ROS)**.



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International Space Station?

- It is a large spacecraft which **orbits around Earth in the low earth orbit**.
- The first piece of the International Space Station was **launched in 1998 launched by a Russian rocket**.
- It has science labs from the **United States, Russia, Japan and Europe**.
- It serves as a **microgravity and space environment research laboratory** in which scientific research is conducted in astrobiology, astronomy, meteorology, physics, and other fields.
- The station is divided into two sections i.e. the **Russian Orbital Segment (ROS)** is operated by Russia, while the **United States Orbital Segment (USOS)** is run by the United States as well as many other nations.

Purpose of Space Station

- A space station is essentially a **large spacecraft that remains in low-earth orbit** for extended periods of time.
- It is like a **large laboratory in space, and allows astronauts to come aboard and stay** for weeks or months to carry out experiments in microgravity.

2.3 IT MINISTER LEADS INDIAN DELEGATION AT G20 SUMMIT VIRTUALLY

Recently, the G20 ministers adopted a declaration for “**Leveraging Digitalization for a Resilient, Strong, Sustainable and Inclusive Recovery**” at the G20 Digital Ministers’ Meeting 2021.

Highlights

- The G20 Digital Ministers’ Meeting was **hosted by Italy**.
- The Ministers agreed to work towards the enhanced cooperation on the **pillars of Digital Economy and Digital Government** with the adoption of declaration.
- **Addressing the changing nature of skills**
 - In all fields of knowledge, the **new paradigms of data-intensive science and data-driven innovation** continue to transform the landscape of research, technology and innovation, driving the use of digital tools.

- It is emphasizing on the **importance of promoting human-centred technological development** by increasing access to research and higher education for all, strengthening digital skills, and addressing the digital divide.
- It recognised that **enhanced collaboration, cooperation and exchange of best practices** at the international level and interaction with stakeholders contribute to the common goal of utilizing digitalization for sustainable, resilient and inclusive recovery.
- **Ethical Principles and Values in Research and Higher Education**
 - **Protect human rights, human dignity, privacy and personal data** throughout the life cycle of the design and use of Artificial Intelligence (AI);
 - Ensure that **inclusion, fairness, equality, non-discrimination and access** define all Open Research and Education initiatives;
 - Produce and share information about research and education in an **open, secure and Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable (FAIR)** way;
 - Recognize the **contributions of all partners in the research process** while encouraging worldwide collaboration;
 - Promote the **participation of women and girls in STEM studies** and in other subjects linked to the design and implementation of digital initiatives;
 - Develop digital initiatives across all disciplines so as to **promote equal access and participation by all communities** in an inclusive and equitable manner;
 - Ensure the **sustainability of the development and use of trustworthy and robust digital resources** for higher education, research and innovation
- **Towards a Common Understanding of Digital Spaces**
 - Access to data and to other **research-relevant digital objects enhances the reproducibility** of scientific results, facilitates inter-disciplinary co-operation, and stimulates economic growth through better opportunities for innovation;
 - It recognizes the importance of **protecting human dignity, human rights, including privacy, and personal data** as well as intellectual property rights while fostering such access; and
 - The international **co-operation in research is critically important for advancing science and technology** and for solving societal and global challenges

India at G20 Digital Ministers' Meeting

- The digital platforms like **Aadhaar and direct benefit transfers have not only empowered people in India** but have also led to savings of over USD 24 billion in the last seven years.
- India has invited **G20 countries for cooperation towards digital inclusion and social empowerment**, highlighting that digital platform in India have prevented leakages in the delivery of government schemes.
- The Indian minister committed **India's support towards closer partnerships at the G20 forum** and invited countries for future cooperation towards digital inclusion and social empowerment.
- It suggested that **G20 countries should collaborate on a free, open, transparent, safe, and trustworthy** internet for all to leverage technology.
- India shared its model for the **availability of robust and secured digital infrastructure**, including digital platforms and connectivity under the Digital India programme. from

2.4 ZERO TOLERANCE TO CORRUPTION AND BLACK MONEY, SAYS KIREN RIJJU AT THE 8TH JUSTICE MINISTERS MEET OF THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION

Recently, the Union Minister of Law & Justice has participated in the **8th Justice Ministers Meet of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization**.

India at 8th Justice Ministers Meet

- The Minister said that the approach of the Indian is of **Zero Tolerance to Corruption and Black Money** and the country has a sound legal framework backed by strong institutional mechanism to deal with corruption.
- The Minister apprised the **gathering the slew of legislative and executive measures** taken by India to be largely UNCAC (UN Convention against Corruption) compliant.
- The Minister informed the launching of **E-Lok Adalat as an effective tool** to settle disputes, combining technology.
- The Minister urged the SCO Member States to **promote exchange of ideas, best practices and experiences** in identified areas through this prestigious podium.
- The Experts Working Group of SCO Member States discussed the **importance of providing free legal aid to the citizens** as also cooperation in all spheres including legal initiatives, given the spread of the coronavirus pandemic.

Key Developments at 8th Justice Ministers Meet

- The ministers of justice discussed the **role of law (legal system) during the pandemic**, emphasizing that no state can combat the virus alone, and all must work together to overcome its effects.
- The Ministers of Justice exchanged views on the **provision of free legal aid to citizens** in accordance with national legislation.
- The participants of the Meeting has noted the threat that **corruption poses to human society** and **sharing the concern of the global community** about this problem.
- The ministers of justice emphasized that the **establishment of the rule of law based on the principles of respect, protection and promotion of human rights in all spheres of social, political and economic life** is a major factor in the stability, sustainability and successful development of the SCO member states.
- The ministers of justice of the SCO member states declare the following:
 - Strengthen the work on the implementation of the **Agreement on Cooperation between the Ministries of Justice of the SCO Member States** signed in Dushanbe on August 18, 2015;
 - Strengthen **interaction between the ministries of (law and) justice of the SCO member states** in order to preserve and expand mutual trust;
 - To make efforts to **hold regional conferences on the provision of free legal aid to citizens**, organize mutual visits of representatives of institutions and services involved in the provision of free legal aid;
 - Establish an **exchange of experience between the ministries of justice of SCO member states** in the field of combating corruption, taking into account the improvement of national legislation and the introduction of new technologies.

Initiatives adopted by India in field of Justice Delivery

E-Court Services Project

- It was conceptualized on the basis of the “**National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the Indian Judiciary – 2005**”.
- It is a **Pan-India Project**, monitored and funded by Department of Justice, Ministry of Law and Justice, for the **District Courts** across the country.
- The **objectives** of E-Court Services Project are:
 - To provide efficient & time-bound citizen centric services delivery as detailed in eCourt Project Litigant's Charter.
 - To develop, install & implement decision support systems in courts.

- To automate the processes to provide transparency in accessibility of information to its stakeholders.
- To enhance judicial productivity, both qualitatively & quantitatively, to make the justice delivery system affordable, accessible, cost effective, predictable, reliable and transparent.

Tele-Law

- The Department of Justice has partnered with **NALSA and CSC e-Governance Service India Limited** for mainstreaming legal aid to the marginalised communities through **Common Services Center (CSC)**.
- Tele-Law means the **use of communications and information technology** for the delivery of legal information and advice.
- The e-interaction between lawyers and people would be through the **video-conferencing infrastructure available at the CSCs**.
- The concept of Tele-Law is to **facilitate delivery of legal advice through a panel of lawyers** stationed at the state Legal Services Authorities (SALSA) and CSC.

Nyaya Mitra Scheme

- It aims at **assisting the district judiciary in reduction of pendency** of ten year old cases and increasing access to justice for marginalized people.
- The program was **launched in 227 selected districts of 16 States** i.e. Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Odisha, eight states of North Eastern Region and Jammu & Kashmir during April 2017.
- The position of the NMs was open to **retired judicial officers and retired government officers** (with legal background only).
- The **objectives** of Nyaya Mitra Scheme are:
 - Providing assistance to the High Court / district judges for speedier disposal of ten year old pending cases;
 - Building convergence with legal services authorities, relevant govt. departments, subordinate judiciary and litigants for speedier disposal of pending cases; and

- Undertake Access to Justice Initiatives to support effective implementation of Article 39-A of the Constitution of India ensuring that easy and affordable legal aid is available to all irrespective of economic or other disabilities of those wishing to access it

Nyaya Kaushal

- It is **India's First-Ever e-Resource Center** in Nagpur.
- It aims to provide **ease of access and smooth functioning for e-filing and video conferencing** to courts across the country from the Centre itself.
- It is equipped with features that will **provide access to Supreme Court, other various High Courts, Courts in talukas** and included Family and Labour courts.
- It is **connected to all three levels of courts** in the country.
- It aims to **tackle the inequality of access with the use of technology, saving time and energy** of the litigants seeking justice in the areas of traffic and transport.

2.5 WHAT THE 'NO-PATROL' ZONES IN EASTERN LADAKH MEAN

Recently, as Indian and Chinese troops disengage from **Patrolling Point (PP) 17A near Gogra Post**, the two sides have followed the template for disengagements from previous points since last year.

No-patrolling zone?

- When two forces disengage from a face-off point where they had been eyeball-to-eyeball or in close proximity to each other, **one way to prevent new face-offs is to create a no-patrolling zone.**
- It is a zone in which **troops from neither side are allowed** for a certain length of time.
- The area becomes a zone where **neither side is allowed to patrol.**
- The idea of the **no-patrolling zone between India and China** can be traced back to the **border war of 1962.**
- China created a sort of **buffer zone extending from where its forces were to where the LAC was** after declaring a unilateral ceasefire on November 21, 1962.

Patrolling Points

- PPs are patrolling points **identified and marked on the LAC**, which are patrolled with a stipulated frequency by the security forces.

- They serve as a **guide to the location of the LAC for the soldiers**, acting as indicators of the extent of 'actual control' exercised on the territory by India.
- **Purpose of Patrolling Points:** The regular patrolling of PPs, the Indian side is able to establish and assert its physical claim about the LAC.
- **Numbering of Patrolling Points:** All Patrolling Points are not numbered and only few PPs are numbered where there are no prominent features.
 - Some of the PPs are prominent and identifiable geographical features, such as a pass, or a nala junction where no numerals are given.
- **Patrolling Points on the LAC:** Almost all the Patrolling points are on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) except PP10, PP11, PP11A, PP12 and PP13 i.e. from Raki Nala to Jivan Nala which do not fall on the LAC.
 - Unlike the Line of Control (LOC) with Pakistan, the border with China is not physically held by the Army all along i.e. the PPs have neither posts nor are manned.
- **Identification of Patrolling Points:** These PPs have been identified by the high-powered China Study Group, starting from 1975 when patrolling limits for Indian forces were specified.
 - The frequency of patrolling to PPs is finalised by the Army Headquarters in New Delhi, based on the recommendations made by the Army and ITBP.
- **Patrolling Points currently under dispute:** PPs 10 to 13 in Depsang sector, PP14 in Galwan, PP15 in Hot Spring, and PP17 and PP17A in Gogra are currently being disputed by both sides.



Importance of Patrolling

- The forces patrol the region to **assert their control over the territory in the case of an undecided boundary** like the one between India and China.
- The patrolling points for India are decided by a body known as the **China Study Group (CSG)**, a secretary-level official group that is the sole adviser to the central government on matters related to China.
- There are over 60 patrolling points in eastern Ladakh.
- In some cases these points are **marked on the map and in others, the specific geographical features** act as traditional patrolling points.
- At all places barring the **Depsang Plains**, the patrolling points are on the LAC.
 - In Depsang, the limit of patrolling is considerably inside Indian Territory from the LAC.

Location of No-Patrol Zones

- The **PP17A** will become the third region where Indian troops used to patrol before the standoff began in May 2020, and will not do so now.

- On each side, the **forces were allowed to have around 30 troops at a distance of about 1.7 km from PP14**, and another 50 troops each a kilometer further behind.
- In 2021, India and China **agreed to disengage from the north and south banks of Pangong Tso** where, at some locations, troops and tanks had been barely a few hundred meters apart.
 - **On the south bank**, in the Chushul sub-sector, the two sides were sitting on previously unoccupied peaks of the Kailash Range.
 - **On the north bank of Pangong Tso**, China had come in the deepest, and Chinese troops were sitting on peaks above the spur known as Finger 4, which is 8 km west of India's perception of the LAC at Finger 8.
 - The area between Finger 3 and Finger 8 has been a **no-patrol zone**.
- It has also been agreed to have a **temporary moratorium on military activities** by both sides in the North Bank, including patrolling to the traditional areas.
- The Patrolling will be resumed only when **both sides reach an agreement in diplomatic and military talks** that would be held subsequently.

2.6 INDIAN NAVAL SHIPS SHIVALIK AND KADMATT ARRIVE AT MUARA, BRUNEI AS PART OF DEPLOYMENT TO SOUTH EAST ASIA

Recently, the **Indian Naval Ships Shivalik and Kadmatt** arrived at Muara, Brunei as part of their **deployment to South East Asia** in pursuance of India's 'Act East' Policy.

Indian Naval Ships Shivalik

- It is an **indigenously designed and built** by Mazagaon Dock Limited (MDL) under **Project 17**.
- It is a multi-role **Guided Missile Stealth Frigate**.
- They are the **first Indian warships to be built with stealth features** and will be the lead frigates of the country's navy during the first quarter of the 21st century.
- It is **fitted with Klub anti-ship and BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles** providing strong attacking capabilities.
- The **fire control systems** used on these frigates are **developed by DRDO and built by Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL)**.
- The Shivalik Class frigates are driven by **combined diesel and gas (CODOG) propulsion system**.

- The Shivalik carries **two HAL Dhruv or two Sea King mk42B** and the Satpura carries **two K-31 Kamov helicopters**.

Indian Naval Ships Kadmatt

- It is an indigenously designed and built by the **Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers of Kolkata** under Project 28.
- It is the **second of four anti-submarine warfare corvettes** built for the Indian Navy.
- It has been named after the **Kadmatt Island of India's Lakshadweep Islands** and carries on the legacy of her predecessor INS Kadmatt (P 78).
- It has a **low radio, acoustic, magnetic and Infra Red (IR) signature** owing to a 'X' shaped hull form, raft mounted engines and an IR suppression system.
- It is also the **first warship to be equipped with the Kavach decoy system** for protection against anti-ship missiles.



Significance of Bilateral Ties between India and Brunei

Political Relations

- The diplomatic relations between India and Brunei were **established in May 1984**.
- India set up its **High Commission in Brunei on 18 May 1993** and Brunei set up its resident **High Commission in India on 12 August 1992** headed by an Acting High Commissioner.
- The main elements binding the two countries are:

- **Export of crude oil by Brunei to India** and its contribution to India's energy security.
- Brunei's role as an **important ASEAN Member Country**; and
- Brunei has a **10,000-strong Indian community**
- Brunei has been supportive of India's earlier 'Look East Policy' and also the present '**Act East Policy**' and in expansion and deepening of cooperation with ASEAN.

Commercial Relations

- India's main exports to **Brunei consist of transport equipment, meat & meat products, gems & jewellery, rice & spices.**
- India is one of the **largest importers of crude oil from Brunei** and has been importing crude oil worth US \$ 500 million to US 1 billion approximately every year.

Cultural Relations

- The **discovery of oil in Brunei in 1929 brought a number of Indians** to Brunei to work in the hydrocarbon sector and allied services.
- Currently, there are approximately **11,000 Indian nationals and 269 registered PIOs** living and working in Brunei.
- An **Indian Chamber of Commerce** was established in Brunei in July 1972 which currently has over 100 Indian business establishments as its members.
- **Indian businesses in Brunei are mainly in the retail sector** such as in groceries and food product stores, textiles, automotive, sports goods, footwear, hardware, restaurants, drapers, hairdressers, etc.
- The Indian community in Brunei numbering around 10,000 comprise of a majority from the **States of Tamil Nadu (over 40%), Uttar Pradesh (over 15%) and Kerala (over 10%)** with the rest from other States.

2.7 - 5 PRINCIPLES NEEDED FOR GLOBAL MARITIME SECURITY, SAYS PM MODI AS HE CHAIRS UNSC MEET

Recently, the Prime Minister has proposed **five principles to ensure global maritime security**, including responsible connectivity and peaceful resolution of disputes, as he chaired a UN Security Council debate.

5 Principles for Global Maritime Security?

- The **principles proposed** by the Prime Minister are:
 - Removing barriers from legitimate maritime trade,
 - Encouraging responsible maritime connectivity,
 - Settling maritime disputes through peaceful means and based on international law,
 - Jointly facing natural disasters and maritime threats created by non-state actors, and
 - Preserving the maritime environment and resources
- The debate on maritime security was one of **three signature events being organised by India** during its presidency of the Security Council.
- The statement promotes **safe and secure shipping while ensuring freedom of navigation** in line with international laws.
- It seeks **enhanced cooperation to protect critical infrastructure**, including cross-border infrastructure.

Need for Global Maritime Security

- India's statement on maritime security contained a **tacit reference to China's aggressive actions** in the South China Sea.
- **Growing interlinked threats:** The maritime insecurity is also compounding the terrorist threat and the growing and interlinked threats call for a truly global and integrated response.
- **Shared global commons:** The UN estimates that more than three billion people worldwide, mainly in developing countries, depend on the ocean for their livelihood and well-being.
- It is engaged in the **business of maritime security, providing escort and guard services** to the marine industry on a worldwide basis.

Challenges in Global Maritime Security

- Maritime security is being undermined by **challenges around contested boundaries and navigation routes**, and depletion of natural resources through illegal or unreported fishing.
- **Thievery:** When transporting valuable goods and resources, there are sometimes attempts at the local level to steal these goods from vessels.
- **Trespassing:** Large-scale security measures concern things that can happen on an international scale, usually as the result of more malicious operations than individual crimes, like terrorism, environmental crimes, smuggling and trafficking.

- **Illegal Maritime Trade:** A side effect of increasing maritime trade and economic globalization is that it will facilitate the expansion of transnational crime.
 - Trafficking in drugs, arms and people is already big business, and maritime shipping is a crucial method of transport.
- **Human Trafficking:** It is another one of the main issues that face international marine security.
 - Illegal migration has been present in the maritime sector for a long time, whether it's people escaping political unrest or unwilling people being trafficked.
 - It is difficult for the marine industry to catch all the illegal immigration, but proper marine security techniques help minimize the problem.
- **Environmental Damage:** Because large-scale commercial operations take place in the ocean ecosystem, there will inevitably be incidents that harm the environment.
- It is the job of marine security officers to help ensure that their vessel's operations harm the environment as little as possible.

2.8 UNION AGRICULTURE MINISTER ADDRESSES THE SCO MEETING

Recently, the Union Minister of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has addressed the 6th meeting of **Agriculture Ministers of the member countries of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)**.

Highlights

- The meeting was organized virtually in **Dushanbe, Tajikistan**.
- It stated that the **agriculture sector in India performed well** even during the severe Covid-19 pandemic as **exports have also registered significant growth**, contributing to global food security.
- The Government of India is determined to **attain sustainable development goal to end hunger, achieve food security and nutrition**.
- The minister emphasized that the **bio-fortified varieties are a source of staple diets, rich in micro nutrients** and are being promoted to address the aspects of malnutrition in the country.
- It was expressed that the Government with the **goal to double farmer's income by 2022** has launched several programs to:
 - Enhance optimal utilization of water resources;
 - Create new infrastructure for irrigation;
 - Conserve soil fertility with balanced use of fertilizers;
 - Provide connectivity from farm to market; and
 - Information and Communication Technology (ICT) linkage besides building infrastructure, organic farming
- India with her **tremendous growth trajectory in the field of agriculture** will continue to share best practices and build capacities of other developing countries, both bilaterally as well as through collaboration with international organizations.

Role of India in SCO

- India is a **full member of the SCO** and has played significant role since being a member of SCO.
- India values and honors its relationship with SCO in **promoting multilateral, political, security, economic and people-to-people interaction** in the region.
- It is important to **organize the SCO Agriculture Ministers' meeting on strengthening cooperation in food security** and nutrition especially in this challenging time of COVID-19 pandemic.

- India has stated that there is **need for close interaction and cooperation among countries** to keep the normal functioning of the food supply chain to safeguard food and nutritional security.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

- It is a **permanent intergovernmental international organisation** established in 2001.
- It was formed in **Shanghai (China)** by **Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.**
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Charter was signed during the **St. Petersburg SCO Heads of State meeting in 2002** and came into force in 2003.
- In 2017 Astana, the **status of a full member** of the Organization was granted to **India and Pakistan.**
- The SCO's **main goals** are as follows:
 - Strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states;
 - Promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, the economy, research, technology and culture, as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, and other areas;
 - Making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region; and
 - Moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order
- The organisation has two permanent bodies i.e. the **SCO Secretariat based in Beijing** and the **Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) based in Tashkent.**
- The SCO comprises eight member states, namely India, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- The SCO counts **four observer states**, namely Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran and Mongolia.
- The SCO has **six dialogue partners**, namely Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey and Sri Lanka.

2.9 CEC INAUGURATES 11TH ANNUAL MEETING OF THE FORUM OF THE ELECTION MANAGEMENT BODIES OF SOUTH ASIA (FEMBoSA) FOR 2021

Recently, the **Chief Election Commissioner of India** has inaugurated the 11th Annual meeting of the **Forum of the Election Management Bodies of South Asia (FEMBoSA)** for the year 2021.



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FEMBoSA 2021

- The meeting in Virtual mode was hosted by the **Election Commission of Bhutan**.
- The delegations from **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka** participated in the day-long meeting.
- The theme of FEMBoSA 2021 was '**Use of Technology in Elections**'.

What is FEMBoSA?

- It was established at the **first meeting of the representatives of Election Management Bodies** of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Pakistan held in Dhaka, Bangladesh in the year 2010
- It is an **active regional cooperation association** of Election Management Bodies.
- It represents a **very large part of the democratic world**.
- Its logo with **golden pearls** stands for the eternal values of **transparency, impartiality, democracy and cooperation**.
- The member countries of the FEMBoSA are the Election Management Bodies of South Asia countries namely **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka**.

Significant Activities of FEMBoSA

- Member organizations **celebrate National Voter's Day** in a calendar year in their respective countries
- Initiative of establishing **South Asia Institute for Democracy and Electoral Studies (SAIDES)** in Nepal
- In order to **increase knowledge related to elections**, take initiatives to include voter education in the school-level textbooks of their respective countries
- Implementation of recommendations of **South Asian Disabilities Organizations** for the inclusion of disabled people in the electoral system and the creation of suitable election environment
- The initiative of **establishing FEMBoSA Secretariat** has been taken

Objectives of FEMBoSA

- Promote contact among the **Election Management Bodies of SAARC countries**;
- **Share experiences** with a view to learning from each other; and

- Cooperate with one another in **enhancing the capabilities of the Election Management Bodies** towards conducting free and fair elections.

2.10 DELHI GOVT SIGNS MOU WITH IB BOARD FOR DELHI BOARD OF SCHOOL EDUCATION

Recently, the Delhi government has signed an agreement with the **International Baccalaureate (IB)**, which would be a partner in the newly set up **Delhi Board of School Education (DBSE)**.

Highlights

- The IB will be a **knowledge partner to DBSE** which is the first ever school board of Delhi set up in March 2021.
- The collaboration with IB will **ensure revolutionary changes in the field of school education** in the national capital.
- A team of experts will visit the schools associated with DBSE and it would **assist the teachers to improve the standard of education**.
- In July 2021, the Delhi government had announced that **30 of its schools will be affiliated to DBSE** for the first academic session (2021-22).
- Currently, **193 schools in India are affiliated to the IB board**, all of which are private schools.

International Baccalaureate

- It is formerly known as the **International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO)** founded in 1968.
- It is a **non-profit foundation** offering educational programmes.
- It is headquartered in **Geneva, Switzerland**.

Objectives of International Baccalaureate

- It offers **four educational programmes**:
 - the **IB Diploma Programme** and the **IB Career-related Programme** for students aged 15 to 19;
 - the **IB Middle Years Programme** for students aged 11 to 16; and
 - the **IB Primary Years Programme** for children aged 3 to 12
- It focuses on **fostering critical thinking and building problem-solving skills**, while encouraging diversity, international mindedness, curiosity, and a healthy appetite for learning and excellence.

- It provides students **distinct advantages** as they enter a world where asking the right questions is as important as discovering answers.

Benefits of working with International Baccalaureate

- The **district, regional and national bodies** can work with the IB to recognize **IB programmes** as part of their curricula.
- The **implementation of access to IB programmes** can provide the following benefits:
 - Access to several creative choices for educating students.
 - Acknowledgment as an international leader in education.
 - Access to IB recognition subject matter experts and professional development opportunities.
- The opportunity to **build relationships with other countries** that recognize the IB.
- It **encourages governments and universities to define policies** that detail how an IB education relates to the national system of education and is treated for admission, credit and placement at universities and colleges.
- The research shows that students in the **IB Primary Years Programme (PYP)** and **Middle Years Programme (MYP)** performed better than non-IB students in a global International Schools' Assessment study that ran from 2009-2011.
- IB teachers are given access to:
 - **high quality professional development** that encourages critical thinking, self-reflection and dedication to lifelong learning and continuous improvement
 - **innovative and diverse education frameworks**, unit planners, teaching resources and evaluation tools
 - **certification and degree programmes** offered by highly respected universities worldwide
 - a pedagogy known to produce students who are **motivated to continue inquiry and lifelong learning**, beyond school study.

2.11 MAIDEN AL-MOHED AL-HINDI EXERCISE SET TO BEGIN BETWEEN INDIAN NAVY AND SAUDI ARABIA NAVY

Recently, the **Ministry of Defence** has announced that it is gearing up for the maiden **AL – Mohed AL – Hindi Exercise**.

AL – Mohed AL – Hindi Exercise

- It is a **bilateral maritime exercise** between **Indian Navy** and **Saudi Arabia Navy**.
- **Indian Navy's guided-missile destroyer INS Kochi** reached Saudi Arabia for the "Al-Mohed Al-Hindi 2021" exercise.
 - The UAE fielded a **guided missile corvette and a Panther helicopter** for the exercise with INS Kochi.
- It will showcase the **reflection of growing defence and military cooperation** between India and Saudi Arabia.
- It is taking place amid **rising tension in the Gulf region after a drone attack** on a merchant tanker off Oman killed a British national and a Romanian citizen.
- It comprises a **number of shore and sea-based drills** between the two navies.

Significance of India's participation in Bilateral Exercises

- It is an indication of the **highest level of trust and confidence** between the member nations.
- It is a key **confidence building measure (CBM)** and an **indication of the faith reposed by India** on another nation or a group of member nations.
- It enables forces to **understand each other's drills and procedures**, overcome language barriers, and facilitate familiarisation with equipment capabilities.
- It facilitates **understanding and familiarisation with new technologies** that other countries may be utilizing and enables on-the-job training of each other's crews.
- It promotes **brotherhood and camaraderie** between soldiers and militaries.
- It is a tool for **projection of a nation's soft power** i.e. culture, language, customs, beliefs, food habits and lifestyle.

2.12 INDIAN NAVY CONCLUDES EXERCISE 'ZAIR-AL-BAHR' CONDUCTED WITH QATAR NAVY IN PERSIAN GULF

Recently, the second edition of **Exercise ZAIR-AL-BAHR** was conducted in the Persian Gulf.

ZAIR-AL-BAHR Exercise

- It is a bilateral exercise between **Indian Navy** and **Qatar Emiri Naval Force (QENF)**.
- The present edition of the exercise included a **three-day harbour phase** followed by a **two-day sea phase**.

- The sea phase comprised of tactical maritime exercises involving **Surface Action, Anti-Piracy exercises, Air Defence, Maritime surveillance, Boarding operations** and SAR exercises.
- In the sea phase of the exercise, **Indian Navy Stealth Frigate INS Trikand, QENF Missile Boats of Barzan and Damsah class, Fast-Attack Crafts of MRTP 34 class and Rafale Fighter Aircraft** participated.

Significance of ZAIR-AL-BAHR Exercise

- Indian Navy remains **committed towards ensuring peace, stability and security in the region** and is ever-ready to **cooperate and collaborate with partner Navies** on issues of Maritime safety and security.
- The 2nd edition of exercise Zair-Al-Bahr will contribute towards the **Indian Navy's efforts to consolidate Inter-operability** and forge strong bonds of friendship with the Qatari Navy.
- The bilateral maritime exercise between two navies would further **strengthen the maritime exchanges between the two countries** and enhance maritime security in the region.

2.13 INDIA ORGANISES IBSA TOURISM MINISTERS' MEET

Recently, India has organized the **IBSA (India, Brazil and South Africa)** Tourism Ministers' virtual meeting.

Highlights

- The 2021 meeting was aimed to **promote tourism cooperation among the member states** and reviewed the intra IBSA Tourism cooperation.
- The meeting emphasised the **importance of domestic tourism in reigniting the tourism economy** as it can prepare the domestic tourism industry for the arrival of international visitors.
- It recognized the importance of **strengthening cooperation in tourism to overcome the impact of Covid 19 pandemic** on the tourism sector.
- The adoption of the **IBSA Tourism Ministers Joint Statement** was a significant moment during the 2021 meeting of tourism minister.
 - It is an **outcome document on cooperation and promotion** for speedy recovery of travel and tourism.

IBSA

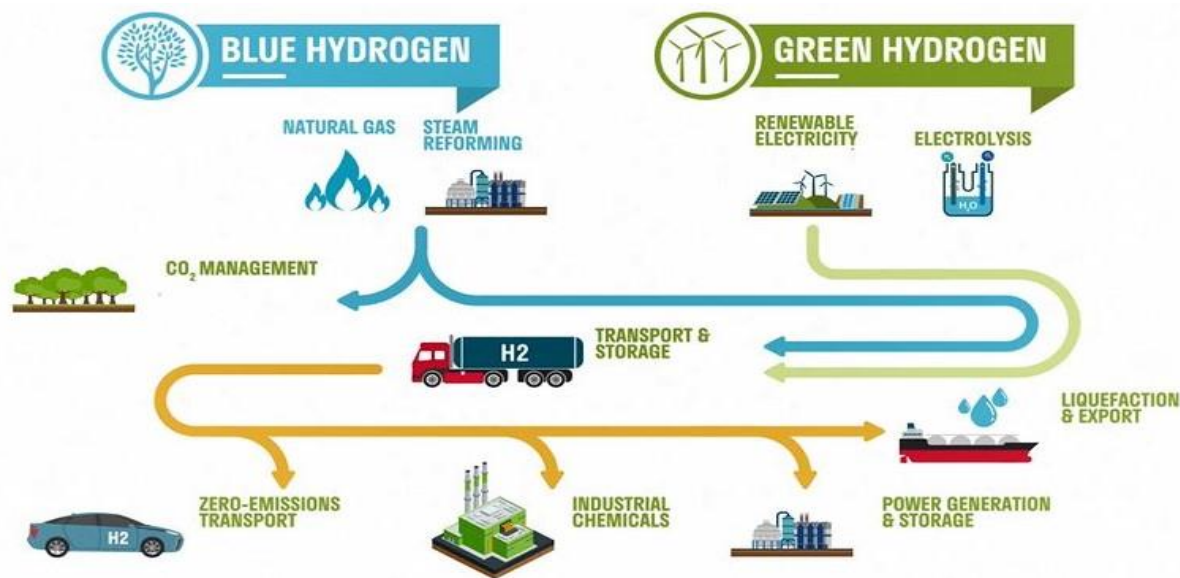
- It is a unique forum which **brings together India, Brazil and South Africa**, three large democracies and major economies from three different continents, facing similar challenges.
- It is a **trilateral, developmental initiative** between the **Government of India, The Government of Federative Republic of Brazil** and **The Government of the Republic of South Africa**.
- The grouping was **formalised and named the IBSA Dialogue Forum** when the foreign ministers of the three countries met in Brasilia on June 6, 2003 and issued the **Brasilia Declaration**.
- It aims to promote **South-South cooperation and exchange**.
- The aim of the **IBSA Tripartite Agreement** is:
 - For **strengthening relations** between the member countries for economic development;
 - For **promoting cooperation** in the field of tourism; and
- **Expansion of tourism relations** with a view to understand and appreciate each other's history, culture and way of life

2.14 UK EXPRESSES WILLINGNESS FOR COLLABORATING WITH INDIA ON GREEN HYDROGEN

Recently, the Ministry of Power has provided that **United Kingdom** is expressing its willingness to **collaborate with India on Green hydrogen**.

Green Hydrogen?

- It is produced by **splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen using an electrolyzer** that may be powered by electricity generated from renewable energy sources.
- It is **distinct from grey hydrogen**, which is produced from methane and releases greenhouse gases into the atmosphere.
- Green Chemicals like **ammonia and methanol can directly be utilised** in existing applications like fertilisers, mobility, power, chemicals, shipping among others.
- Green Hydrogen blending up to 10 per cent may be **adopted in City Gas Distribution (CGD) networks** to gain widespread acceptance.



Importance of Green Hydrogen

- **Cost competitive:** The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) has said in a recent report that currently all hydrogen consumed in India comes from fossil fuels. However, by 2050, nearly 80% of India's hydrogen is projected to be green.
 - It is clear that green hydrogen will become the most competitive route for hydrogen production by around 2030 which would be driven by dramatic cost declines in key production technologies such as electrolyzers and solar PV.
- **Power source of energy-intensive industries:** While wind and solar energy can provide the electricity to power homes and electric cars, green hydrogen could be an ideal power source for energy-intensive industries like concrete and steel manufacturing.
- **Addresses the problem of intermittency in existing renewable energy plants:** The renewable energy to create the fuel can help solve the problem of intermittency that plagues wind and solar power, and so it is essentially efficient storage.
- **Zero emissions from aircraft:** The energy density of green hydrogen is three times that of jet fuel, making it a promising zero-emissions technology for aircraft.

Concerns associated with Green Hydrogen

- **Production centres are situated away from demand centres:** The most renewable energy resources that can produce low-cost electricity are situated far from potential demand centres.
- **Lack of decarbonization ability of Indian industries:** The near-term promise of hydrogen lies in “hard-to-abate” industrial sectors like steel, refining, fertilizer & methanol.
 - These industries contribute to 11 per cent of India’s total emissions and have limited opportunities to decarbonize because fossil fuels play an integral role in their core processes.
- **Massive expansion of renewable generation:** It is noted that hydrogen fuels need renewable energy to be green, which will require a massive expansion of renewable generation to power the electrolysis plants that split water into hydrogen and oxygen.
- **Lack of storage infrastructure:** The green hydrogen is hard to store and transport without a pipeline and in some places, hydrogen is lot more expensive than other fuels such as natural gas.
- Its storage requires compression to 700 times atmospheric pressure, refrigeration to 253 degrees Celsius.

2.15 GLOBAL GEOSPATIAL INFORMATION COMMUNITY SENSITIZED ABOUT UNWGIC TO BE ORGANIZED IN INDIA

Recently, **Global Geospatial Information Community** was sensitized about the second **United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC)** to be organized by **India** in October 2022.

- The curtain raiser event was organized on the margins of the Eleventh Session of the **United Nation Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM)** to be held during the end of August 2021.

United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress (UNWGIC)?

- It is organized by **United Nation Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM)** every four years.
- The **first United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress** held in Deqing, Zhejiang Province, **China in October 2018**.
- The UNGGIM has entrusted the **responsibility of organizing the second UNWGIC to India** during October 2022.
- It follows from the mandate of the **UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)** to convene global forums to promote comprehensive dialogue on global geospatial information management.

Objectives of UNWGIC

- Its objective is **enhancing international collaboration among the Member States** and relevant stakeholders in Geospatial information management and capacities.
- It is aimed at **working towards implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and to keep the promise to leave no one behind.
- It will reflect the **importance of geospatial information to support technological development**, address the development and strengthening of geospatial information management systems and capacities.
- It aims to **demonstrate the importance of international coordination and cooperation** for building a human data and geography community.
- It is aimed to **provide a convening, participatory and inclusive environment** to enhance the communication, understanding, knowledge and application of geospatial information management.

Geospatial Law in India

- The Government of India had published the **National Map Policy in 2005** and subsequently, SOI published certain guidelines for its implementation.
- In 2021, the **Department of Science and Technology of the Government of India (DST)** issued “Guidelines for acquiring and producing **geospatial data and geospatial data services including Maps**”.
- Under these Guidelines, the Government has recognized the **crucial role played by Geospatial Data / Maps in the digital economy** as well as traditional sectors and also significantly liberalized the erstwhile licensing regime.
- The Guidelines classify entities which are engaged in the **Processing of Geospatial Data into “Indian Entity (ies)”** and others (Restricted Entities).

2.16 PERMANENT MISSION OF INDIA (PMI)

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between **Permanent Mission of India to the WTO (PMI)**, **Centre for Trade and Investment Law (CTIL)** of the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade, and **Centre for Trade and Economic Integration (CTEI)**.

Highlights

- The MoU would **promote collaboration** between academicians, practitioners, jurists, policy makers, and students from India, Switzerland and other countries.
- It would help **create a technical and nuanced understanding of emerging and new areas** of international trade and investment law and related disciplines.
- The MoU will **remain in force for three years**.

Benefits of MoU

- It will **provide valuable academic and research opportunities** to the employees of CTIL and the Department of Commerce in the field of international trade and investment law.
- It aims to **enhance the understanding of the DOC officials, CTIL researchers and academics** on contemporary issues of international trade.
- It will build **support for India's positions** in international trade and investment law.
- It would be **beneficial to formulating India's positions on various issues** on international trade negotiations and dispute settlement.

What is Permanent Mission of India (PMI)?

- The Permanent Mission of India (PMI) in Geneva has **three separate wings** namely:
 - The **Permanent Mission of India to the United Nations** and Other International Organizations in Geneva;
 - The **Permanent Mission of India to the Conference on Disarmament** in Geneva; and
 - The **Permanent Mission of India to the World Trade Organization (WTO)** in Geneva
- The **Consulate General of India** in Geneva is housed in the Permanent Mission of India to the UN in Geneva.

Guidelines for engaging Interns at Permanent Mission of India to the WTO

- Interested **Indian citizens and OCI card holders may apply** for internship at the Permanent Mission of India to WTO (PMI to WTO).
- The PMI to WTO **shall not undertake any responsibility or facilitate issue** of visa/ permission to work and stay in Switzerland for internship.
- The **applicant should possess** a Graduate or higher degree, preferably in the field of economics or law or in a field related to any other area of WTO work.



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- Internship shall be available for a **period of upto 12 months maximum**, to be decided by the PMI to WTO.
- Interns shall **report to and work under the close supervision** of the concerned Indian delegate/delegates.

2.17 RECENTLY, THE UNION CABINET HAS GIVEN ITS APPROVAL FOR RATIFICATION OF THE KIGALI AMENDMENT TO THE MONTREAL PROTOCOL ON SUBSTANCES THAT DEplete THE OZONE LAYER FOR PHASE DOWN OF HYDROFLUROCARBONS (HFCs) BY INDIA.

Recently, the Union Cabinet has given its approval for ratification of the **Kigali Amendment to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer for phase down of Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs)** by India.

Key Highlights

Implementation strategy and targets

- **National strategy for phase down of Hydrofluorocarbons** as per the applicable phase down schedule for India will be developed after required consultation with all the industry stakeholders by 2023.
- The **Ozone Depleting Substances (Regulation and Control) Rules** to allow appropriate control of the production and consumption of Hydrofluorocarbons to ensure compliance with the Kigali Amendment will be done by mid-2024.

Benefits of Ratification of Kigali Amendment

- HFC phasedown is expected to **prevent the greenhouse gas emissions, helping prevent climate change** and would benefit the people.
- The industry producing and consuming Hydrofluorocarbons will be **phasing out Hydrofluorocarbons as per the agreed schedule under and transition to non-HFC** and low global warming potential technologies.

Implication of Ratification of Kigali Amendment

- Hydrofluorocarbons phasedown is **expected to prevent the emission of up to 105 million tonne of carbon dioxide** equivalent of greenhouse gases, helping to avoid up to 0.5 degree Celsius of global temperature rise by 2100, while continuing to protect the ozone layer.
- Implementation of HFC phase down under the Kigali Amendment through the **adoption of low-global warming potential and energy-efficient technologies** will achieve energy efficiency gains and carbon dioxide emissions reduction.
- HFCs phase down **implementation will involve synergies with on-going government programmes** and schemes of the Government of India with the objective to maximize the economic and social co-benefits, besides environmental gains.
- There would be scope for **domestic manufacturing of equipment as well as alternative non-HFC and low-global warming potential chemicals** to enable the industry to transition to the low global warming potential alternatives as per the agreed HFC phase down schedule.

Kigali Agreement?

- Under the Kigali Amendment; Parties to the Montreal Protocol will **phase down production and consumption of Hydrofluorocarbons**, commonly known as HFCs.
- While **HFCs do not deplete the stratospheric ozone layer**, they have high global warming potential ranging from 12 to 14,000, which have adverse impact on climate.
- The **parties reached agreement at their 28th Meeting of the Parties (MOP)** held in October 2016 in Kigali, Rwanda to add HFCs to the list of controlled substances and approved a timeline for their gradual reduction by 80-85 per cent by the late 2040s.
- India will **complete its phase down of HFCs in 4 steps from 2032** onwards with cumulative reduction of 10% in 2032, 20% in 2037, 30% in 2042 and 80% in 2047.
- **All amendments and adjustments of the Montreal Protocol**, prior to the Kigali Amendment have Universal support.

Montreal Protocol

- It is a **Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer**.
- It is an **international environmental treaty for protection of the Ozone Layer** by phasing out the production and consumption of man-made chemicals referred to as ozone depleting substances (ODS).
- The **stratospheric ozone layer protects humans and the environment** from harmful levels of ultraviolet radiation from the sun.

- India became a **Party to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer on 19 June 1992** and since then has ratified the amendments to the Montreal Protocol.
- India has **successfully met the phase out targets of all the Ozone Depleting Substances** as per the Montreal Protocol Schedule.
- It is to date the **only UN treaty ever that has been ratified every country** on Earth - all 198 UN Member States.
- The **Parties are assisted by the Ozone Secretariat**, which is based at UN Environment Programme headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya.

2.18 NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK (NDB)

Recently, the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry has chaired the **5th meeting of BRICS Industry Ministers' Meeting** under the Chairmanship of India.

- India expresses desire to **expand the horizon of New Development Bank (NDB)** for strengthening social infrastructure.

What is New Development Bank (NDB)?

- It was proposed at the **fourth BRICS Summit in New Delhi (2012)** by the leaders of **Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa**.
- It is established to **mobilize resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects** in BRICS and other emerging economies, as well as in developing countries.
- During the sixth BRICS Summit in Fortaleza (2014), the leaders signed the **Agreement establishing the New Development Bank (NDB)**.
- It also **provides technical assistance for projects to be supported by the NDB** and engage in information, cultural and personnel exchanges with the purpose of contributing to the achievement of environmental and social sustainability.
- In 2018, the New Development Bank received **observer status in the UN General Assembly**, establishing a firm basis for active and fruitful cooperation with the United Nations.
- The **main objectives** of NDB operations are:
 - Fostering development of member countries
 - Supporting economic growth
 - Promoting competitiveness and facilitating job creation

- Building a knowledge sharing platform among developing countries
- It was **formerly referred to as BRICS Development Bank** and is a multi-lateral development bank.
- Its **headquarters is in Shanghai**, China and the **first regional office of the NDB** is in Johannesburg, South Africa.
- The Bank shall have an **initial authorized capital of US\$ 100 billion** and the initial subscribed capital shall be US\$ 50 billion, equally shared among founding members.

Importance of New Development Bank (NDB)

- **Providing counterbalance:** It is increasingly being viewed as a counterweight to western-led global-development institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank.
- **Lowering global US dollar reliance:** The NDB will challenge US hegemony is through the lack of reliance on the US dollar.
 - The BRICS plan to lend in domestic currencies, which is in contrast to the World Bank which only lends in dollars.
- **Investment in sustainable infrastructure:** The core purpose of the NDB is to mobilize resources for infrastructure and sustainable development.

2.19 UNIVERSAL SERVICE OBLIGATION FUND (USOF)

Recently, the **Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)** has signed an Agreement with Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) for **Internet Connectivity in North Eastern States India**.

Highlights

- The agreement calls for hiring of **10 Gbps International Bandwidth for Internet Connectivity to Agartala** from Bangladesh Submarine Cable Company Limited (BSCCL), Bangladesh via Cox Bazar/Kuakata.
- USOF will **provide financial support to BSNL for a period of three years** for hiring the aforesaid International Bandwidth.
- The availability of high speed internet access will **help the citizens in access in various e-services** such as e-governance, e-education, e-health, e-commerce, e-banking, etc.
- The citizens will get **high-speed internet connectivity for better access** to e-services in the North Eastern states.

Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)?

- It is an attached office of the **Department of Telecom**.
- It is headed by the **Administrator** appointed by the central government.
- The resources for **implementation of USO are raised by way of collecting universal service levy** which is a percentage of Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR) of telecom service providers.
- It is given **statutory status** by the Indian Telegraph (Amendment) Act, 2003.
- It is deposited in the **Consolidated Fund of India** and is dispatched on the approval of the Indian Parliament.

Objectives of Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)

- Provide widespread and non-discriminatory **access to quality ICT services** at affordable prices to people in rural, remote, and unserved, areas.
- Provide an **effective and powerful linkage to the hinterland** thereby mainstreaming the population of rural and remote parts of the country.
- Ensure that **universal services** are provided in an economically efficient manner.
- Ensure that by **developing hitherto unconnected areas**, the benefits of inclusive growth are reaped by our nation, bringing in its wake rapid socio-economic development and improved standards of living.

Significance of Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF)

- It is aimed at **providing financial support for the provision of telecom services** in commercially unviable rural and remote areas of the country.
- It aims to provide a **balance between the provisions of Universal Service** to all uncovered areas, including the rural areas.
- Its objective is to **provide access to telecom services in a non-discriminatory manner** to people in the rural and remote areas at affordable and reasonable prices, thereby bridging the rural-urban digital divide.

2.20 MAN, WHO VANDALISED MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH'S STATUE IN PAK GETS BAIL

Recently, a nine-foot-tall bronze **equestrian statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh** was vandalized in Lahore Fort.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh?

- He was the **founder of the Sikh empire** who forged a modern empire of toleration.
- He famously **owned the Koh-i-Noor diamond**, has been voted the greatest leader in world history.
- Ranjit Singh struck a careful **balance between his role as a faithful Sikh ruler** and his desire to **act as friend and protector of his empire's Muslim and Hindu peoples**.
- His **prime minister** was a **Dogra Rajput** (a Dogri-speaking member of the Rajput warrior caste or clan group), his **finance minister** a **Brahmin** (a member of the high-status Hindu priestly caste), his **foreign minister** a **Muslim**.

Ranjit Singh and Lahore

- Maharaja Ranjit Singh (1780-1839) **seized Lahore in 1799** after he was invited to rule the city by its Hindu, Muslim, and Sikh elite.
- Lahore was in a shambles at the time when the dying Mughal Empire was **no longer able to extend its patronage and protection**.
- Lahore was battered by **repeated assaults from bands of Afghan raiders**, and **weakened by infighting among some Sikh groups**.
- Ranjit Singh brought **peace and security to Lahore** and revived its economic and cultural glory.
- He proclaimed himself **maharaja of the Punjab in 1801**, and proceeded to rule with religious tolerance for communities other than Sikhs.
- He carried out **repairs to the Lahore fort** which was built by Emperor Akbar at the site of an older mud-brick structure and was subsequently beautified and expanded by Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb.

Popularity of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Pakistan

- The Maharaja is identified by many with the **identity of Punjab** as the founder of a mighty empire that sprawled over a large part of northwestern India.
- The people of Pakistan **underlined Ranjit Singh's 'secular' values**, and recalled his appointment of several Hindu and Muslim ministers.
- He had handed over the famous **Sunehri Masjid of Lahore**, which had been converted into a Gurdwara by some Sikh militias, back to Muslims, and had funded its renovation.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh's Statue

- The life-size statue was gifted to the **Walled City of Lahore Authority (WCLA)** by SK Foundation UK.
- **Gurdwara Dera Sahib**, built on the spot where the fifth Sikh guru Arjan Dev was martyred, and **Ranjit Singh's samadhi**, located adjacent to the Lahore Fort, **draw a large number of Sikh tourists** from across the world.
- The equestrian sculpture had been **commissioned to mark the 180th anniversary of the death** of one of Lahore's most famous and significant historical figures.

2.21 EXERCISE KONKAN 2021

Recently, the **Exercise Konkan 2021** was held between **INS Tabar and HMS Westminster** on 16 Aug 21 in the English Channel.

- It included the **participation of integral helicopters** of the two ships and the Falcon Electronic Warfare aircraft.

Exercise Konkan

- It is an **annual maritime exercise** between **Indian Navy and Royal Navy of United Kingdom**.
- It had **commenced in 2004**.
- It is a **long-running exercise designed to test the ability** of the two Commonwealth navies to operate side-by-side during war and other crunch scenarios.
- The exercise typically takes place off the namesake **Konkan stretch of coastline in India** which is running for 450 miles along the Western Seaboard and encompassing Mumbai and Goa.

Significance of Exercise Konkan

- It aims to **promote mutual understanding and provide exposure** to operating procedures, communication measures and best practices.
- It allows both Navies to **develop greater confidence** to operate together during maritime missions.
- It is a **tangible symbol of the commitment of both nations** in ensuring a positive climate at sea for enhancing strategic stability and promoting economic prosperity.

2.22 INS RANVIJAY, INS KORA CARRY OUT MARITIME EXERCISE WITH PHILIPPINES

Recently, the **Maritime Partnership Exercise** was held between **Indian Navy and Philippine Navy** in the **West Philippine Sea**.

Maritime Partnership Exercise

- It included several **operational manoeuvres** and the **participating ships of both navies** were satisfied with the consolidation of interoperability achieved through this operational interaction at sea.
- The two ships of the Indian Navy, namely **INS Ranvijay** (Guided Missile Destroyer, D55) and **INS Kora** (Guided Missile Corvette, P61) participated in the exercise with with **BRP Antonio Luna** (Frigate, FF 151) of the Philippine Navy.
- It provides an **enriching opportunity for the Indian Navy** to consolidate its bilateral relations with the Philippine Navy.
- India and The Philippines share a very **robust defence and security partnership** built over several years and spanning across all domains.
- It is aimed at **strengthening bilateral collaboration** in the maritime domain towards a collective aim of ensuring a stable, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

INS Ranvijay

- It is the fifth and the latest ship of the **Rajput class Guided Missile Destroyers**.
- It was **commissioned in 1987** at Poti in erstwhile USSR.
- It is equipped with **Brahmos Missile**.

INS Kora

- It is the lead ship of the **Kora-Class of Corvettes** in active service with the Indian Navy.
- It is equipped with **3M-24 Anti-Ship Missiles as a primary weapon**, with **two Strela-2M Anti-Air Missiles** as defensive weapons.
- The Kora-class corvettes were built at **Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE)** and outfitted at Mazagon Dock Limited (MDL).
- The Kora-class corvettes were designed by **India's naval design bureau under Project 25A**, as a replacement for the Russian-designed Petya II-class corvettes of the Indian Navy.

- The four **Kora-class corvettes** are **INS Kora, INS Kirch, INS Kulish** and **INS Karmuk**.

2.23 ADB, INDIA SIGN \$500 MILLION LOAN TO EXPAND METRO RAIL NETWORK IN BENGALURU

Recently, the **Government of India** and the **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** today signed a **\$500 million loan to expand the metro rail network** in Bengaluru with construction of two new metro lines.

Highlights

- The new metro lines will **further strengthen safe, affordable and green mobility in Bengaluru**, having positive impact on enhancing quality of life, sustainable growth in urban habitat and livelihood opportunities.
- The project supports **urban transformation of Bengaluru City into a more livable and sustainable city** with concepts of transit-oriented development (TOD) and multi-modal integration (MMI).
 - TOD-based urban development model will target **realigning growth and increase the city's economic productivity** by creating higher density, compact, mixed use, mixed income, safe, and resource-efficient and inclusive neighborhoods.
 - TOD also aims to **raise land values along these corridors, generating capital revenues for the state government** to meet the city's long-term investment needs.
 - MMI will aim to **provide people-oriented, environment-friendly solutions and a safe, total mobility solution** for all Bangalore residents through the seamless integration of different modes of public transport.
- The project will bring various benefits including **road de-congestion, better urban livability and environmental improvement**.
- It will construct **two new metro lines, mostly elevated, along Outer Ring Road and National Highway 44** between Central Silk Board and Kempegowda International Airport with 30 stations.

Asian Development Bank

- It is a **regional development bank** which was established in 1966.
- Its headquarter is in **Manila, Philippines**.
- It aims to **promote social and economic development** in Asia.

- It admits the members of the **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) and non-regional developed countries.**
- It is **modeled closely on the lines of World Bank** having similar weighted voting system where votes are distributed in proportion with members' capital subscriptions.
- **Japan holds the largest proportion of shares** followed by US, China, India and Australia.
- It envisions a **prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific**, while sustaining its efforts to eradicate extreme poverty in the region.
- Currently, it is **owned by 68 members**, out of which **49 members belong to Asia-Pacific region.**

2.24 Sikhism in Afghanistan is in the news?

Recently, the **46 evacuated Afghan Sikhs** carried with them three of the six remaining swaroops of the Guru Granth Sahib to India.

- With the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan, the history of the minuscule but **important Sikh community** in the country could be on the verge of its end.

History of Sikhism in Afghanistan

- The Sikh community is in fact **indigenous to Afghanistan** and has a long and deep-rooted history in the region.
- The book, '**Afghan Hindus and Sikhs: History of a thousand years**' (2019) suggested that the **history of Sikhism in Khurasan** (medieval Afghanistan) begins with the founder of the Sikh religion, Guru Nanak.
- In 2011, a research paper explained that the Sikh population in the region consisted of those **members of the indigenous population** who **resisted the process of conversion** from Buddhism to Islam.
- In 1504, the **Mughal emperor Babur captured Kabul** and by 1526 he was the master of Northern India.
 - Kabul became one of the **provinces of Hindustan** and was referred to as 'Hindustan's own market' by Babur.
 - It **remained part of Hindustan till 1738** when it was conquered by the Persian ruler Nadir Shah.
- During this period the **Sikh chroniclers record a number of names and instances** when Sikh followers in Kabul came to the region now known as East Punjab, to pay respect to the Sikh Gurus.

- The 18th-century text, **Mahima Prakash**, written by Sarup Das Bhalla, mentions the name of '**Kabuli wali Mai**' (lady from Kabul) who did seva (voluntary service) while digging a stepwell at Gondiawal in East Punjab.
 - The same text also mentions **Bhai Gonda who was sent to Kabul to propagate the teachings of the seventh Sikh Guru** and that he also established a Gurudwara there.

Period between mid 18th to the mid 19th century

- For about 101 years the **Afghans and Sikh empire were neighbours** and mostly antagonists.
- By the early decades of the 19th century, the **Sikh empire under Maharaja Ranjit Singh had annexed large parts of the Durrani Empire** under the Afghans.
- During the **Second Anglo-Sikh war of 1848-49**, however, the Sikhs were supported by the Afghans, even though they lost out to the British.
- In the late 19th and early 20th century, in reaction to the Christian proselytising activities following the annexation of the Sikh empire by the British, the **Singh Sabha movement**, a Sikh reform movement was established.
 - The impact of the movement was **felt across Afghanistan** as Akali Kaur Singh spent a year in Afghanistan, going from house to house to spread the Sikh doctrine.

Sikh exodus from Afghanistan

- The first major exodus of the Afghan Sikhs and Hindus happened during the **reign of Amir Abdur Rahman Khan** in the late 19th century.
 - His rule in Afghanistan was termed by the British as the '**reign of terror**'.
 - He is known to have **judicially executed** close to 100,000 people.
- Several Hindus and Sikhs had emigrated during this period and the **Afghan Sikh community of Patiala in Punjab** is known to have been established then.
- It was in 1992 when the **Mujahideen took over Afghanistan** that the most extensive exodus of the Sikhs and Hindus started.
 - Before the Mujahideen took over, in 1988, on the **first day of Baisakhi**, a man with an AK-47 stormed into a gurdwara and gunned down 13 Sikhs.
 - In 1989, **Gurdwara Guru Teg Bahadur Singh** in Jalalabad was attacked by rockets fired by the Mujahideen, leading to the death of 17 Sikhs.

- More than a **hundred Afghan Sikhs died during the six month period** when the Mujahideen targeted mainly the Sikh residential area of the city.

2.25 CABINET APPROVES MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN INSTITUTE OF CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS OF INDIA (ICAI) AND INSTITUTE OF PROFESSIONAL ACCOUNTANTS OF RUSSIA (IPAR)

Recently, the Union Cabinet has approved the signing Memorandum of Understanding between **Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI)** and **Institute of Professional Accountants of Russia (IPAR)**.

Highlights

- It would help in **establishing mutual cooperation** in the areas of Professional Accountancy Training, Professional Ethics, Technical Research, Advancement of Accounting Knowledge, Professional and Intellectual Development.
- It aims to **strengthen cooperation in matters of accountancy profession** through exchange of views and information.
- It is also intended to **promote mutual cooperation through seminars, conferences and joint activities** mutually beneficial to both the parties.
- It provide updates on the **development of the accountancy profession in India and Russia** to promote the profession in the world.
- The parties will also **create a linkage to each other's websites** as a means of information support.

Impact of MoU between ICAI and IPAR

- It is expected to provide an **additional impetus to prospects of the ICAI Members** to get professional opportunities in Russia in short to long term future.
- The aim of MoU is to work together to **develop a mutually beneficial relationship for the best interest of ICAI members** and the two respective organizations.
- With MoU, ICAI would be able to help **strengthen the partnership with Russia** by providing the Export of Services in Accountancy profession.

Possible Benefits of MoU between ICAI and IPAR

- ICAI members are holding **middle to top level positions in various organisations across the countries** and can influence the decision/policy making strategies of respective organisations of a country.
- ICAI through its **vast network of Chapters and Representative Offices** is committed to play an important role by sharing the prevalent practices in their respective countries.
- It will enable Government of India to **adopt the best practices being followed by ICAI** to attract foreign investment and to encourage them to establish their setup in India.
- The MoU will benefit **Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Institute of Chartered Accountants of India and Institute of Professional Accountants of Russia.**

Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI)

- It is a **statutory body** established by an Act of Parliament i.e. **The Chartered Accountants Act, 1949.**
- It was established for **regulating the profession of Chartered Accountancy** in the country.
- It functions under the administrative control of the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs.**
- It is the **second largest professional body of Chartered Accountants** in the world, with a strong tradition of service to the Indian economy in public interest.
- The affairs of the ICAI are **managed by a Council** in accordance with the provisions of the **Chartered Accountants Act, 1949** and the **Chartered Accountants Regulations, 1988.**
- Out of 40 members of the institute, **8 are nominated by the Central Government** generally representing the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, Securities and Exchange Board of India, Ministry of Corporate Affairs, Ministry of Finance and other stakeholders.

2.26 INDIA EMERGES AS SECOND IN GLOBAL MANUFACTURING RISK INDEX: CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD REPORT

Recently, the Cushman and Wakefield has released the **2021 Global Manufacturing Risk Index.**

Global Manufacturing Risk Index?

- Cushman & Wakefield's Manufacturing Risk Index report **ranks countries based on a range of factors** including:
 - Risk and cost factors
 - Political and economic risk

- Market conditions and labor costs
- Market Access
- It is based on the **most favorable locations for international manufacturing**.
- The index **ranks 47 countries** across Europe, the Americas, and the Asia Pacific.

Highlights of 2021 Global Manufacturing Risk Index

- China has **retained its top position** and continues to diversify its manufacturing base.
 - The report stated that even with the Biden administration's concerns about trade, **China continues to diversify its base to move up the value chain** to focus on telecom, high-tech, and computers.
 - Guangdong and Jiangsu regions are **spearheading its electronic components and automotive manufacturing**, while Zhejiang and Liaoning focus on **chemicals and natural resources**.
- The US is a desirable hub as it **offers a large consumer market** as well as incentives at both state and federal levels.
- In the category of the **cost scenario**, India and Vietnam were overtaken by Indonesia, while China retained its lead position.
 - **India slipped to the third rank**, while Indonesia moved to the second from the fifth spot.
 - The report stated that **Jakarta's dipping rents have a part to play in cost effectiveness** that pushed Indonesia up by three spots.
- In the category of the **risk scenario** that takes into account lower levels of economic and political risks, **India is nowhere near the top**.
 - India has been clubbed in the **third quartile** of the rankings along with Malaysia, Belgium, Indonesia, Bulgaria, Romania, Thailand, Hungary, Colombia, Italy, Peru and Vietnam.
 - On top of the **first quartile** is China, followed by Canada, US, Finland, Czech Republic.
 - The **second quartile** has countries like Lithuania, France, Netherlands, Spain, Poland, Japan, UK etc.
- In the category of the **bounce back rating** that takes into account a country's ability to restart its manufacturing sector, India is in the fourth quartile with Sri Lanka, Mexico, Vietnam, Indonesia, Bulgaria, Thailand, Tunisia, Peru, Philippines and Venezuela.

Performance of India in 2021 Global Manufacturing Risk Index

- India has been ranked as the **second-most sought-after manufacturing destination** in the world.
- It is **second only to China** and has **surpassed the US** to bag the second ranking.
- India **slipped a rank in the cost scenario** and was overtaken by Indonesia.
- India could **benefit from relocations from China to other parts of Asia**, as it already has an established base in pharmaceuticals, chemicals and engineering sectors.
- The index stated that **reforms in land and labour laws** are critical to ensure India's success as a global manufacturing hub.

Why India is a Desired Destination for Manufacturers?

- **Benefits of having a manufacturing set-up in India:** Manufacturing set-up requires favorable business conditions, policies along various intricate details, for business to thrive.
 - As a manufacturing hub, India provides various advantages for companies worldwide.
 - India has relatively cheap land and labor, ever-improving infrastructure, and policies that go in favor of a thriving business.
- **Boosting India as a Manufacturing Destination:** With the ambition to boost domestic manufacturing in the nation, the government introduced various financial incentives for companies to produce IT hardware.
- The government of India is actively **bringing reforms to boost the Indian economy** and some of the efforts taken include:
 - Accounting as the lowest in Southeast Asia, **India has reduced corporate tax** from 30% to 25%.
 - Government introduced initiatives like '**Make in India**' and '**Skill India**' that have achieved a feat in creating job opportunities in the manufacturing sector.
 - These initiatives have also enhanced skill development to create a large pool of skilled human resources.

2.27 WHO WAS HARI SINGH NALWA, THE SIKH WARRIOR WHO WON MANY BATTLES AGAINST AFGHANS?

During recent times the two superpowers of the world including **erstwhile USSR and the USA had to pull out their forces** as the battles for establishing control dragged on for decades with no result in sight.

- But **Hari Singh Nalwa**, a legendary Sikh commander, tamed the **turbulent forces at play in Afghanistan** and earned the reputation of the most feared Sikh warrior there.

Who was Hari Singh Nalwa?

- He was one of the **main and most trustworthy commanders** of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's force.
- He remained **Governor of Kashmir, Hazara and Peshawar**.
- He defeated various Afghans and established control over various **regions along the boundary of Afghanistan and prevented Afghans from entering Punjab** through Khyber Pass.
 - Khyber Pass was the **main route to enter India by the foreign invaders** from 1000 AD till early 19th century.
- The government of India **released a stamp on the name of Nalwa** in 2013 for his bravery and ferocity.

Early Life of Hari Singh Nalwa

- Born in 1791 in an **Uppal family of Gujranwala (now in Pakistan)**, it is said that Nalwa was attached to his name when he had killed a tiger at a very young age.
- He was also called '**Bagh Maar**' (**killer of tiger**) after an attack by a tiger on him during a hunting expedition.

Hari Singh Nalwa v/s Afghans

- Hari Singh Nalwa participated in various **battles against Afghans because of which Afghans lost their control** over various Afghan-held territories.
- In 1807, at the age of 16, he participated in the **Battle of Kasur** (now in Pakistan) and defeated Afghani ruler Kutab-ud-din Khan.
- In the **Battle of Attock** (in 1813) Nalwa along with other commanders won against Azim Khan and his brother Dost Mohammad Khan, who fought on behalf of Shah Mahmud of Kabul.
- In 1818, Sikh army under Nalwa won the **Battle of Peshawar** and Nalwa asked to be stationed there.
- Nalwa took control over Jamrud in 1837, a **fort at the entryway to Afghanistan** through Khyber Pass.

Final Battle between Hari Singh Nalwa and Afghans

- The historians said that in the **Battle of Jamrud**, where Hari Singh Nalwa had died, Dost Muhammad Khan along with his five sons participated against Sikh army.

- Hari Singh Nalwa, who was stationed at Peshawar at that time, **marched towards Jamrud to save Sikh army** which was surrounded by Dost Mohammad's troops.
- When the Afghan army came to know about **Nalwa's sudden arrival**, the Afghans were taken aback and started leaving the battleground in haste during which Nalwa got seriously injured and later died.

2.28 QUAD COUNTRIES ALL SET TO START MALABAR EXERCISE

Recently, the Navies of the four member nations of the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)** i.e. **India, the United States, Japan, and Australia** are participating in the 25th edition of the **Malabar Exercise**.

Malabar Exercise

- It is a **multilateral war-gaming naval exercise** that was started in 1992.
- It **began as a bilateral exercise** between the navies of India and the United States.
 - **Two more editions of the exercise** were carried out in 1995 and 1996, after which there was a break until 2002 in the aftermath of India's nuclear tests.
- The exercise has been **conducted every year since 2002** and Japan and Australia first participated in 2007.
- **Japan joined the naval exercise in 2015 as a permanent member**, and Malabar became a trilateral exercise.

Significance of Malabar Exercise

- Malabar, which began as a bilateral exercise, is now one of the **cornerstones of military interoperability** of the Quad forces.
- It aims to **ensure freedom of navigation** for all nations.
- It will witness complex exercises including **anti-surface, anti-air, and anti-submarine warfare drills**, and other manoeuvres and tactical exercises.
- It would further **enhanced synergy and mutual understanding** among the four navies in undertaking joint maritime security operations.
- It will strengthen the coordination between the navies of the participating countries.

Participation in Malabar Exercise

- The **INS Shivalik multirole frigate, the INS Kadmat anti-submarine warfare corvette, and P8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft** will be part of the exercise.
- The US Navy will be represented by the **USS Barry, USNS Rappahannock, the USNS Big Horn, and P8A patrol aircraft.**
- The Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force will be represented by the **JS Kaga, JS Murasame, and JS Shiranui destroyers**, in addition to a submarine and P1 patrol aircraft.
- The **Royal Australian Navy** will be represented by the HMAS Warramunga.

2.29 INDIA, MALDIVES TO SIGN PACT ON GREATER MALE CONNECTIVITY PROJECT

Recently, **India and Maldives** has signed a contract on the mega **Greater Male Connectivity project (GMCP)**.

Genesis

- The **seeds of the project** were planted during the External Affairs Minister's visit to Malé in September 2019.
- In August 2020, New Delhi had decided to **support the implementation of this project** following a request from the Maldives government.

Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP)?

- It is a **\$500-million infrastructure project** between the Maldives government and a Mumbai-based company AFCONS.
- It involves the **construction of a 6.74-km-long bridge and causeway link** that will connect the Maldives capital **Male** with the neighbouring islands of **Villingli, Gulhifalhu and Thilafushi.**
- It is **funded by India in a grant of \$100 million**, with a line of credit of \$400 million.

Need for Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP)

- Male is the **most densely populated cities** because close to 40% of the entire population of the Maldives lives in Malé, that has an area of approximately 8.30 square kilometers.
- It is very **congested and land is a major issue** and also there is very little scope for Malé city to expand.

- It prompted the current government in the Maldives to consider **decentralisation and the development of other inhabited islands** by equipping them with civic facilities like hospitals and other institutions.
- The **transportation and connectivity to the capital city would improve** and opening up an alternative route for transport, that has been a persistent issue for the country's people.

Significance of Greater Male Connectivity Project (GMCP)

- It supports the vision of Prime Minister Modi and President Solih (Maldives) for **strong bilateral relations**.
- It is a concrete proof that **India is a robust development partner of the Maldives** in addition to being the First Responder in times of any emergency in the Maldives.
- It is the **biggest project India is doing in the Maldives** and also the biggest infrastructure project in the Maldives overall.
- The Chinese-made 1.39 km-long **Sinamalé Bridge connects Malé with the islands of Hulhulé and Hulhumalé** and this project, four times longer, would link the other three islands.

2.30 BRICS AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH PLATFORM INAUGURATED IN INDIA

Recently, the Union Minister for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare has announced the operationalization of **BRICS-Agricultural Research Platform (ARP)**.

- The Minister was addressing the **11th meeting of BRICS Agriculture Ministers** under the theme BRICS Partnership for Strengthening Agro Biodiversity for Food Security and Nutrition.

BRICS-Agricultural Research Platform (ARP)

- It is a **global platform for science-led agriculture** will help in addressing the issues of world hunger, undernutrition, poverty and inequality
- It is prepared and set up in India for **strengthening the cooperation in the field of agricultural research & innovations** amongst the BRICS member States.
- The **Coordinating Centre** of the BRICS-ARP is housed at **NASC Complex, Pusa** under the governance of Department of Agricultural Research & Education/ICAR.

- The BRICS Nations have also appointed their **focal points for BRICS-ARP to interact virtually through the platform** and identify the common problems and develop joint projects for finding the solutions.
- The **Indian Council of Agricultural Research** is the focal organization from India.

Purpose of BRICS-Agricultural Research Platform (ARP)

- It is aimed at **promoting sustainable agricultural development** through strategic cooperation in agriculture and allied sector.
- It has been operationalized to **intensify cooperation in the areas of agricultural research, technology, policy, innovations and capacity building** to sustainably increase yields and farmers income in the BRICS member countries.
- The platform shall **escalate the exchange of research findings and innovation and best practices** for upscaling in the respective BRICS Nations.

2.31 INDIA, KAZAKHSTAN JOINT TRAINING EXERCISE 'KAZIND-21'

Recently, **India and Kazakhstan** has started a 13-day **military exercise** i.e. **KAZIND Exercise** with a focus on counter-terror operations in mountainous terrain.

What is KAZIND?

- It is a **joint training** between the armies of **India and Kazakhstan**.
- The **KAZIND-21** will be conducted at a Kazakh training node in **Aisha Bibi in Kazakhstan**.
- It will provide an opportunity to the Armed Forces of India & Kazakhstan to train for **counter-insurgency/counter-terrorism operation** in the mountainous, rural scenario under UN mandate.
- It will **strengthen mutual confidence, interoperability and enable sharing of best practices** between the armed forces of India and Kazakhstan.

2.32 INDIA IN CHAIR, UNSC ADOPTS RESOLUTION ON TALIBAN; RUSSIA AND CHINA ABSTAIN

Recently, the **UN Security Council** under India's Presidency has adopted a **strong resolution on Afghanistan**.

UNSC Resolution on Afghanistan

- The resolution was **sponsored by France, UK and the US** with **13 members voting in favour, none against** and permanent, **veto-wielding members Russia and China abstaining**.
- It was the **first resolution adopted by the powerful 15-nation Council** on the situation in Afghanistan following the takeover of Kabul by the Taliban.
- The measure **did not cite** a "safe zone" mentioned by French President Emmanuel Macron.

Highlights of UNSC Resolution on Afghanistan

- The resolution has demanded that the **territory of Afghanistan not be used to threaten any country** or shelter terrorists.
- The resolution expects that the **Taliban will adhere to commitments made by it on regarding the safe and orderly departure** from the country of Afghans and all foreign nationals.
- The resolution demands that Afghan territory **should not be used to finance terrorist acts**, and reiterates the importance of combating terrorism in Afghanistan.
- The resolution expects that the Taliban will **adhere to commitments regarding the safe, secure, and orderly departure** from Afghanistan of Afghans and all foreign nationals.
- The resolution calls on the **relevant parties to work with international partners** to take steps to strengthen security and to prevent further casualties.

UN Security Council?

- It held its **first session on 17 January 1946** at Church House, Westminster, London.
- The United Nations Charter established **six main organs of the United Nations**, including the Security Council.
- It gives **primary responsibility for maintaining international peace** and security to the Security Council, which may meet whenever peace is threatened.
- All members of the United Nations **agree to accept and carry out the decisions** of the Security Council.
- Under the **United Nations Charter**, the functions and powers of the Security Council are:
 - to maintain **international peace and security** in accordance with the principles and purposes of the United Nations;
 - to **investigate any dispute** or situation which might lead to international friction;

- to recommend methods of **adjusting such disputes** or the terms of settlement;
- to formulate plans for the **establishment of a system** to regulate armaments;
- to determine the **existence of a threat to the peace or act of aggression** and to recommend what action should be taken;
- to call on Members to **apply economic sanctions** and other measures not involving the use of force to prevent or stop aggression;
- to take **military action** against an aggressor;
- to recommend the admission of new Members;
- to exercise the **trusteeship functions of the United Nations** in "strategic areas"; and
- to recommend to the General Assembly the **appointment of the Secretary-General** and, together with the Assembly, to elect the Judges of the International Court of Justice.

3.1 PAKISTAN FINALISES BILL TO GRANT NEW STATUS TO GILGIT-BALTISTAN

Recently, the Pakistani authorities have finalised a law to award **provisional provincial status** to strategically located **Gilgit-Baltistan**.

Provincial status mean to Gilgit-Baltistan

- The newspaper reported that under the proposed law, the **Supreme Appellate Court (SAC) of Gilgit-Baltistan may be abolished** and the region's election commission is likely to be **merged with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP)**.
- The proposed law suggests that due to sensitivity attached to the region, it could be given **provisional provincial status by amending Article 1 of the Constitution** that related to the provinces and territories.
- It added that a set of **amendments would be introduced to give the region representation in Parliament**, besides the establishment of the provincial assembly in the territory.
- The constitutional amendment is in accordance with the **international practice of merger of territories** and it will not adversely affect the Kashmir cause in any manner.
- The region will become the **fifth province of Pakistan**, although the region is claimed by India as part of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu & Kashmir as it existed in 1947 at its accession to India.

Gilgit-Baltistan region

- It is the **northernmost territory administered by Pakistan**, providing the country's only territorial frontier, and thus a land route, with China, where it meets the Xinjiang Autonomous Region.
- The Gilgit-Baltistan region is surrounded by **Afghanistan** in west, **Pakistan-occupied Kashmir** in south, and **J&K** in east.

Current status of Gilgit-Baltistan region

- Though Pakistan, like India, links **G-B's fate to that of Kashmir**, its administrative arrangements are different from those in PoK.
- While PoK has its own **Constitution that sets out its powers and their limits vis-à-vis Pakistan**, G-B has been ruled mostly by executive fiat.
- It got its present name only with the **Gilgit-Baltistan (Empowerment and Self-Governance) Order, 2009**, which replaced the Northern Areas Legislative Council with the Legislative Assembly.
 - The NALC was an **elected body, but had no more than an advisory role** to the Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas, who ruled from Islamabad.

India's stand on Gilgit-Baltistan region

- India has **clearly conveyed to Pakistan that the entire union territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh**, including the **areas of Gilgit and Baltistan**, are an **integral part** of the country by virtue of its fully legal and irrevocable accession.
- India maintains the Government of Pakistan or its judiciary has **no locus standi on territories illegally and forcibly occupied by it**.

3.2 BOEING'S STARLINER AND NASA'S COMMERCIAL CREW PROGRAMME

Recently, the launch of Boeing's uncrewed **Starliner Orbital Flight Test-2 (OFT-2)** has been postponed once again.

- The spacecraft, which is called the **Crew Space Transportation-100 (CST-100)**, is part of an uncrewed test flight to the International Space Station (ISS) which is part of **NASA's Commercial Crew Program**.

CST-100 Starliner?

- The Starliner, which is supposed to **carry more than 400 pounds of NASA cargo and crew supplies**, will take roughly 24 hours to reach the ISS, after which it will dock there.
- The spacecraft has been **designed to accommodate seven passengers or a mix of crew and cargo** for missions to low-Earth orbit.
- It will **carry up to four NASA-sponsored crew members** and time-critical scientific research.
- The Starliner has an **innovative, weldless structure** and is **reusable up to 10 times** with a six-month turnaround time.
- It features **wireless internet** and **tablet technology** for crew interfaces.
- It will help NASA to **ascertain and certify the transportation system to carry astronauts** to and from the space station in the future.

NASA's Commercial Crew Program

- It is delivering on its **goal of safe, reliable, and cost-effective human transportation** to and from the International Space Station from the United States through a partnership with American private industry.
- Its primary objective is to **make access to space easier in terms of its cost**, so that cargo and crew can be easily transported to and from the ISS, enabling greater scientific research.
- NASA plans to **lower its costs by sharing them with commercial partners** such as **Boeing and SpaceX** through Commercial Crew Program.
- It will give the companies incentive to design and build the **Commercial Orbital Transportation Services (COTS)**.
- It will allow **NASA to focus on building spacecraft and rockets** meant for deep space exploration missions.
- It represents a **revolutionary approach to government and commercial collaborations** for the advancement of space exploration.

3.3 WHO SAYS GUINEA MONITORING 155 CONTACTS AFTER CONFIRMED MARBURG CASE

Recently, the World Health Organization (WHO) has said that **Guinea had confirmed the first recorded case of Marburg disease** in West Africa.

Marburg Virus Disease

- It is a **severe**, often **fatal illness in humans**, formerly known as **Marburg haemorrhagic fever**.
- Marburg virus disease is a **highly virulent disease** that causes haemorrhagic fever, with a **fatality ratio of up to 88%**.
- It is in the **same family** as the virus that causes **Ebola virus disease**.
- The two large outbreaks that occurred simultaneously in **Marburg and Frankfurt in Germany, and in Belgrade, Serbia, in 1967**, led to the initial recognition of the disease.
- The outbreak was associated with **laboratory work using African green monkeys (Cercopithecus aethiops)** imported from Uganda.

Transmission of Marburg Virus Disease

- Human infection with Marburg virus disease initially results from **prolonged exposure to mines or caves inhabited by Rousettus bat colonies**.
- It can spread through **human-to-human transmission via direct contact** (through broken skin or mucous membranes) with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected people, and with surfaces and materials (e.g. bedding, clothing) contaminated with these fluids.
- The Health-care workers have frequently been **infected while treating patients with suspected or confirmed MVD** which has occurred through close contact with patients when infection control precautions are not strictly practiced.
- Transmission via **contaminated injection equipment or through needle-stick injuries** is associated with more severe disease, rapid deterioration, and, possibly, a higher fatality rate.

Symptoms of Marburg Virus Disease

- The **incubation period** (interval from infection to onset of symptoms) varies from **2 to 21 days**.
- The illness caused by **Marburg virus begins abruptly, with high fever, severe headache and severe malaise**. Muscle aches and pains are a common feature.
 - Severe watery **diarrhoea, abdominal pain and cramping, nausea and vomiting** can begin on the third day.
- Many patients develop **severe haemorrhagic manifestations between 5 and 7 days**, and fatal cases usually have some form of bleeding, often from multiple areas.

- **Fresh blood in vomitus and faeces** is often accompanied by bleeding from the nose, gums, and vagina.

Treatment and vaccines for Marburg Virus Disease

- Currently there are **no vaccines or antiviral treatments** approved for MVD.
- The supportive care i.e. **rehydration with oral or intravenous fluids** and treatment of specific symptoms, improves survival.
- There are **monoclonal antibodies (mAbs)** under development and antivirals e.g. **Remdesivir and Favipiravir** that have been used in clinical studies for Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) that could also be tested for MVD.

Marburg virus in animals

- **Rousettus aegyptiacus bats** are considered natural hosts for Marburg virus.
- There is **no apparent disease** in the fruit bats.
- The **geographic distribution of Marburg virus** may overlap with the range of Rousettus bats.
- **African green monkeys (Cercopithecus aethiops)** imported from Uganda were the source of infection for humans during the first Marburg outbreak.

3.4 WHY THE ATLANTIC OCEAN CURRENT SYSTEM IS SLOWING DOWN, AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Recently, a study published in Nature Climate Change notes that the **Atlantic Ocean Circulation**, known officially as the **Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)**, is losing its stability.

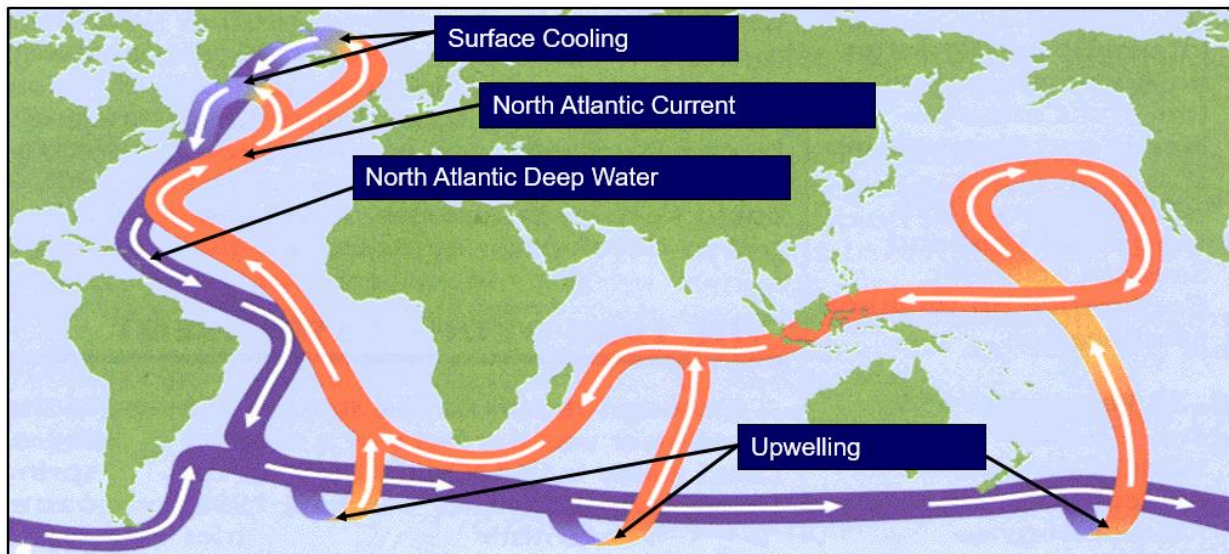
Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation (AMOC)?

- It is a **large system of ocean currents**.
- It **transports warm water** from the tropics northwards into the North Atlantic.
- It is the **Atlantic branch of the ocean conveyor belt or Thermohaline circulation (THC)**, and distributes heat and nutrients throughout the world's ocean basins.

Working of AMOC

- It works like a **conveyor belt**, driven by differences in **temperature and salt content** i.e. the water's density.

- As warm water flows northwards **it cools and some evaporation occurs, which increases the amount of salt.**
- The **low temperature and a high salt content make the water denser**, and this dense water sinks deep into the ocean.
- The **cold, dense water slowly spreads southwards**, several kilometres below the surface.
- It gets pulled back to the surface and warms in a process called **“upwelling” and the circulation is complete.**
- It makes sure that the **world’s oceans are continually mixed**, and that heat and energy are distributed around the earth.



Reasons for weakening of AMOC

- The study reported that the **weakening of AMOC is likely to be associated with a loss of stability** by analysing the sea-surface temperature and salinity patterns of the Atlantic Ocean.
- The report found that the AMOC decline is not just a **fluctuation or a linear response to increasing temperatures** but likely means the approaching of a critical threshold beyond which the circulation system could collapse.
- As the atmosphere warms due to **increasing greenhouse gases, the ability of the ocean to lose heat from the North Atlantic surface** is diminished and one of the driving factors of the AMOC is weakened.

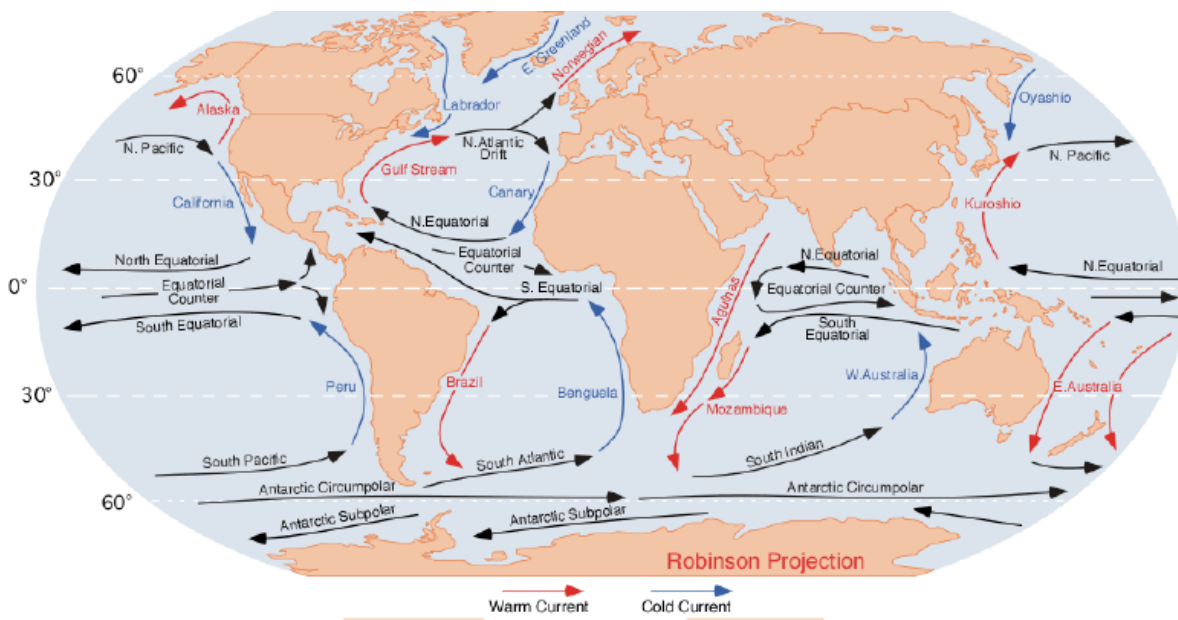
Implications of unstable AMOC

- The Atlantic Ocean's current system, an engine of the Northern Hemisphere's climate, could be weakening to such an extent that it could soon **bring big changes to the world's weather.**
- The surface ocean beneath **retains more of heat as the atmosphere warms** due to increased greenhouse gas emissions.
- The **loss of dynamical stability would imply that the AMOC has approached its critical threshold**, beyond which a substantial irreversible transition to the weak mode could occur.
- If the AMOC collapsed, it would:
 - Increase cooling of the Northern Hemisphere;
 - Sea level rise in the Atlantic;
 - An overall fall in precipitation over Europe and North America; and
 - A shift in monsoons in South America and Africa
- The climate models suggest that the **AMOC will weaken over the 21st Century as greenhouse gases increase** which is because as the atmosphere warms, the surface ocean beneath it retains more of its heat.

Ocean Currents?

- They represent a **regular volume of water in a definite path and direction.**
- The Ocean currents are **influenced by two types of forces** namely:
 - Primary forces that initiate the movement of water
 - Secondary forces that influence the currents to flow
- The **primary forces** that influence the currents are:
 - **Heating by solar energy:** Heating by solar energy causes the water to expand. That is why, near the equator the ocean water is about 8 cm higher in level than in the middle latitudes.
 - This causes a very slight gradient and water tends to flow down the slope.
 - **Wind:** Wind blowing on the surface of the ocean pushes the water to move.
 - Friction between the wind and the water surface affects the movement of the water body in its course.
 - **Gravity:** Gravity tends to pull the water down the pile and create gradient variation.
 - **Coriolis force:** The Coriolis force intervenes and causes the water to move to the right in the northern hemisphere and to the left in the southern hemisphere.

- These large accumulations of water and the flow around them are called Gyres. These produce large circular currents in all the ocean basins.
- **Differences in water density affect vertical mobility of ocean currents:** Water with high salinity is denser than water with low salinity and in the same way cold water is denser than warm water.
 - Denser water tends to sink, while relatively lighter water tends to rise.
 - Cold water ocean currents occur when the cold water at the poles sinks and slowly moves towards the equator.
 - Warm water currents travel out from the equator along the surface, flowing towards the poles to replace the sinking cold water.



Ocean Currents of North Atlantic Ocean

- **North Equatorial Current:** It flows from the coast of Africa in the east to the West Indies in the west parallel to the equator under the influence of the trade winds.
- **Antilles Current:** The South Equatorial current bifurcates into two branches near Cape-de-Sao Roque (Brazil).
 - Its northern branch reinforces the North Equatorial Current.
 - Part of the combined current enters the Caribbean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico, while the remainder passes along the eastern side of the West Indies as the Antilles Current.

- **Florida Current:** The branch entering the Gulf of Mexico is reinforced by a great bulk of warm ocean water driven by the trade winds and by the water brought by the Mississippi river.
- **Gulf Stream:** Beyond the Cape Hattterasupto the Grand banks off New Foundland, it is known as the Gulf Stream.
 - The Gulf Stream receives plenty of warm, water from the Gulf of Mexico and carries it to cold areas.
- **North Atlantic Drift:** From the Grand Banks, the Gulf Stream flows eastward across the Atlantic under the influence of the prevailing westerly winds.
 - Here it is known as North Atlantic Drift and its speed ii quite large in the open ocean.
- **Norwegian Current:** The North Atlantic Drift is divided into two branches when it reaches the European Coast.
 - The northern branch reaches the British Isles from where it flows along the coast of Norway as the Norwegian current and enters the Arctic Ocean.
- **Canaries Current:** The second branch of the North Atlantic Drift takes a southerly turn and flows between Spain and Azores as the cold Canaries Current.
 - This current finally joins the North Equatorial Current completing the circuit in the North Atlantic.
- **East Greenland Current:** This current flows from north to south along the eastern coast of Greenland.
- **Labrador Current:** This current starts from the Baffin Bay and Davis Strait and flows along the coast of Labrador.
 - It brings a large number of icebergs from the Baffin Bay and the East Greenland Current joins it at the southern tip of Greenland.
- **Sargasso Sea:** It is the calm sea lying within the circuit of North Atlantic Current, Gulf Stream, North Atlantic Drift and Canaries Currents.
 - It is full of seaweeds known as Sargassumit is known as **Sargasso Sea**.
 - It spreads over a vast area of about 11,000 sq. km.

3.5 LIONEL MESSI'S PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN PACKAGE INCLUDES CRYPTO FAN TOKENS

Recently, Lionel Messi's signing on fee at Paris St Germain includes some of the **French club's cryptocurrency "fan tokens"**, in the latest big name endorsement of new digital assets.

Fan Tokens?

- Fan Tokens are a type of NFT (**non-fungible token**) which is a **digital-only asset**.
- The Fan Tokens are **digital assets that represent the ownership of a voting right** and give you access to earn unique club-specific rewards and experiences.
- The fan tokens are **volatile assets** and their value can drastically change overnight **similar to Bitcoin and other digital currencies**.
- Fans can purchase said **crypto tokens with real-world money to gain access** to exclusive content and augmented-reality games.
- The fan token holders also get to **vote on mostly minor decisions** related to their clubs.
- The fan tokens are **created by a crypto platform called Socios**.

What decisions can fans vote on?

- It includes **kit designs, goal music, and the team's destination for a pre-season tour**.
- The more tokens a fan has, the **more votes they get in the polls** but ultimately, the polls are decided upon by the clubs.
- Fan Tokens **aren't about transaction** but they are **about ownership as a utility**, which gives the access to a global community of fandom, rewards & team influence.

3.6 WHAT IS CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL OF WHICH GANDHI MAY BECOME FIRST INDIAN RECIPIENT?

Recently, the **Congresswoman Carolyn Maloney from New York** has reintroduced legislation in the US House of Representatives to posthumously award the **Congressional Gold Medal** to **Mahatma Gandhi** for his contributions made through his methods of non-violence.

Congressional Gold Medal?

- It has been commissioned by the Congress as its **highest expression of national appreciation** for distinguished achievements and contributions.
- It is the **highest civilian award** in the US.
- It has been **awarded to the 1980 US summer Olympics team, Robert F. Kennedy, Nelson Mandela and George Washington** among many others.
 - If given the award, **Gandhi would become the first Indian** to receive the Congressional Gold Medal.

- It is given to an **individual or group who performs an outstanding deed or act** of service to the security, prosperity, and national interest of the United States.

Scope of Congressional Gold Medal

- The first recipients of the medal were participants of the **American Revolution, the War of 1812 and the Mexican War.**
- The Congress has **broadened the scope of the medal** to include actors, authors, entertainers, musicians, explorers, athletes, humanitarians and foreign recipients among pioneers in some other fields.

3.7 HOW THE RISE OF TALIBAN HAS PUT TAJIKISTAN IN A SPOT

Recently, the **Afghan government**, created, funded, and trained by the United States, has **capitulated in the face of the Taliban assault.**

- There have been reports which indicate that approximately **1,600 Afghan soldiers have fled to Tajikistan** in the last week.

Genesis

- Until 1991, **Tajikistan** was a part of the **Soviet Union.**
- When **Moscow invaded Afghanistan in 1979**, Tajikistan, along with the other Soviet Socialist Republics in Central Asia, supported the takeover.
- **Tajikistan's support for the Soviets** made them a target of the Afghan Mujahadeen who launched attacks against the country in 1987.
- After the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, **several Tajik soldiers returned to form the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP)** which opposed the ruling communist leader of Tajikistan.
- The new Afghan president, Burhanuddin Rabbani, **an Afghan-Tajik, allowed the IRP to operate from Afghanistan** and also provided the group with arms, ammunition and training.

Geographical extent between Tajikistan and Afghanistan

- Tajikistan lies on **Afghanistan's northeastern border**, adjacent to the Afghan provinces of **Badakhshan, Takhar, Kunduz and Balkh.**

- The 1200-km border is also home to the **junction between the Hindu Kush and Karakoram Mountains**, and is characterised by its rocky, inhospitable terrain.
- Tajikistan was considered to be **under the influence of the Persians** for a long time, and many **ethnic Tajiks residing in Afghanistan retain similar cultural values**.
- Tajikistan, a small landlocked Central Asian nation, has a **predominantly Muslim population** and is largely considered to be undemocratic, volatile, and economically unstable.

Taliban effect in Tajikistan and Afghanistan

- The Afghan-Tajiks form the **second largest ethnic group in the country**, second only to the Pashtuns.
- They **dominate** Afghanistan's northern Panjshir valley.
- Smaller concentrations of **Tajiks live in Herat province**, on the western border with Iran.
- Tajiks also make up a **large percentage of the population of Kabul**, where they have been politically significant and economically successful.
- Tajiks are said to maintain **strong ties with their families and ethnic kin, making the fate and treatment of Afghan-Tajiks extremely important** to their neighbours in the north.

Concerns for Tajikistan

- Rahmonov will fear **three major implications** of Taliban rule in Afghanistan:
 - He will have to consider the **sentiments of Afghan-Tajiks**, some who have been welcomed in the **Taliban's ranks but the majority of whom passionately reject the group**.
 - Dushanbe will be cognisant of the **rise in extremism caused by the dominance of the Taliban**, and the impact it will have on radical factions within Tajikistan who aim to establish an Emirate of their own.
 - Tajikistan will have to find **ways to police its porous border with Afghanistan** in order to prevent illicit drugs and refugees from overflowing into the country.

3.8 HAITI STRUCK BY DEADLY 7.2-MAGNITUDE EARTHQUAKE

Recently, the **powerful earthquake in Haiti** has killed hundreds and injured thousands more.

Genesis of Earthquake in Haiti

- The earthquakes have been **wreaking havoc in Haiti since at least the 18th century**, when the city of Port-au-Prince was destroyed twice in 19 years.
- In 2010, devastating earthquake had occurred along the **Enriquillo-Plantain Garden fault zone**, which cuts across Haiti's southwestern Tiburon Peninsula.
- It is likely the **source of three other big earthquakes in Haiti** between 1751 and 1860, two of which destroyed Port-au-Prince.

Reasons for devastating earthquake in Haiti

- Haiti sits near the **intersection of two tectonic plates** i.e. the **North American plate** and the **Caribbean plate** that make up the Earth's crust.
- The earthquakes can occur when **those plates move against each other and create friction**.
- The **multiple fault lines between those plates cut through or near the island of Hispaniola**, which Haiti shares with the Dominican Republic.
- Hispaniola sits in a place where **plates transition from smashing together to sliding past one another**.
- It is a combination of factors that include a **seismically active area, a high population density of 11 million people** and **buildings that are often designed to withstand hurricanes and not earthquakes**.

What are Faults?

- Faults are **discontinuities or cracks that are the result of differential motion** within the earth's crust.
- The **vertical or lateral slippage of the crust** along the faults causes an earthquake.
- When compressional or tensional force is beyond the elastic limit of rocks, they break and get displaced. This process is called faulting.

Types of Fault

- **Normal Fault:** It is created because of tensional force. In such type of fault, crustal blocks/rocks are displaced away from each other causing expansion of crust.
- **Reverse Fault:** It is created due to compressional force. When the compressional force is beyond the elastic limit of rocks, they break and gets displaced towards each other. It leads to contraction of crust.

- **Thrust Fault:** It is a special type of reverse fault in which fault angle is low.
- **Transcurrent Fault:** When the crustal blocks are displaced parallel to each other, transcurrent faults are formed.

3.9 WHY THE US GOVERNMENT HAS DECLARED WATER SHORTAGE FOR THE COLORADO RIVER BASIN FOR THE FIRST TIME

Recently, the federal government in the US declared a water shortage for the Colorado River basin due to a historic drought, which will lead to water cuts in some southwestern states starting October 2021.

Colorado River Basin

- It is fed by **snowmelt from the Rocky and Wasatch mountains** and flows a distance of over 2,250 km across seven states and into Mexico.
- It is originally known as the **Grand grows from a cold mountain trout stream into a classic Western waterway** slicing through jagged gorges between sweeping, pastoral ranchlands on the upper leg.
- It is about 1,450 miles long, with **headwaters in Colorado and Wyoming**, and eventually flows across the international border into Mexico.
- The drainage basin area of about 246,000 square miles includes all of **Arizona, and parts of California, Colorado, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, and Wyoming**.
- The Colorado River is an **important water resource for areas outside of the basin**, including Denver, Salt Lake City, Albuquerque, Los Angeles, and San Diego.
- The **Colorado River Water Compact drafted in 1922** to divide water between upper and lower basin states was based on analysis of one of the wettest 10-year periods in history.

Management of Colorado River System

- Its basin is **divided into the Upper** (Wyoming, Colorado, New Mexico, Utah and northern Arizona) and **Lower Basins** (parts of Nevada, Arizona, California, southwestern Utah and western New Mexico).
- The entire Colorado River system is **managed with a series of dams and canals to regulate flood control, water conservation and hydropower benefits**.
- In the Lower Basin, the Hoover Dam **controls floods and regulates water delivery and storage**.



Reasons for Water Shortage in Colorado River System

- There are **two reservoirs at the centre** of this water shortage i.e. **Lake Mead** and **Lake Powell**



- Lake Mead located in the **state of Nevada** just a few miles from Las Vegas.
 - Lake Mead is the **largest reservoir in the US** in terms of volume.
 - It was **formed in the 1930s by the Hoover Dam** in Southern Nevada.
 - It provides **water storage in the lower basin** of the Colorado River.
 - Its main source of water is obtained from the **Rocky Mountain snowmelt** and run off.
- Lake Powell is created by the **Glen Canyon Dam in Arizona**.
 - It is a **man-made reservoir** on the Colorado River in Utah and Arizona.
 - It was created by the flooding of **Glen Canyon by the Glen Canyon Dam**, which also led to the 1972 creation of Glen Canyon National Recreation Area.

3.10 IFSCA DOES PILOT RUN OF INTERNATIONAL BULLION EXCHANGE AHEAD OF OCT LAUNCH

Recently, the **International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA)** has launched the pilot run/soft launch of the **International Bullion Exchange (IBX)**.

International Bullion Exchange (IBX)

- It is a **precious metals dealer with an established reputation** as a trusted and dedicated resource for people wanting to **diversify their holdings with intelligent precious metals** and diamond investments.
- It offers investors **multiple possibilities for investing** in precious metals.
- Through International Bullion Exchange, a person can:
 - **Purchase gold or other precious metals** for immediate personal delivery;

- **Open or rollover an existing IRA** into a Precious Metals IRA; or
- **Arrange for convenient and safe storage** at an independent bank or depository
- The holding company **India International Bullion Holding IFSC Limited** has been created for setting up and operationalising International Bullion Exchange, Bullion Clearing Corporation and Bullion Depository in IFSC.

Importance of International Bullion Exchange (IBX) for India

- It shall be the “**Gateway for Bullion Imports into India**”, wherein all the bullion imports for domestic consumption shall be channelized through the exchange.
- It is **expected to bring all the market participants** at a common transparent platform for bullion trading.
- It provides an **efficient price discovery, assurance in the quality of gold, enable greater integration** with other segments of financial markets and help establish India’s position as a dominant trading hub in the World.

Bullion?

- It is the **general name for pure gold or silver** (at least 99.5%) which have been transformed into bars or minted into coins for investment purposes.
 - The examples of **gold bullion** include gold bars and gold non-numismatic coins.
- It refers to **physical gold and silver of high purity** that is often kept in the form of bars, ingots, or coins.
- It can sometimes be **considered legal tender**, most often held in reserves by **central banks or used by institutional investors** to hedge against inflationary effects on their portfolios.

3.11 INTERNATIONAL AIR TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION (IATA) TRAVEL PASS INITIATIVE

Recently, the budget carrier SpiceJet has decided to start trials of **International Air Transport Association (IATA) Travel Pass** after IndiGo.

IATA Travel Pass Initiative?

- The travel pass will be a **mobile app that will help passengers manages their travel** in line with government requirements for Covid-19 tests or vaccines.

- The IATA Travel Pass will also **enable authorised labs and test centres to securely send test results or vaccination certificates** to passengers.
- It is more **secure and efficient** than current paper processes used to manage health requirements.
- The information through the IATA Travel Pass can be **shared with border authorities** requiring testing or proof of vaccination as a condition of international travel.
- It aims to provide governments with the **confidence to reopen borders** without imposing quarantines on incoming travelers.

Need for Travel Pass Initiative

- There are several jurisdictions which are **insisting on vaccination certificates, Covid19 RT-PCR tests and other health documents** as international travel restarts in the aftermath of Covid-19.
- The Digital passports like the IATA travel pass have been developed to **provide governments with the means to verify the authenticity of tests or vaccinations.**
- It will help airlines with the **ability to provide accurate information to their passengers** on test requirements and verify that a passenger meets the requirements for travel.

Purpose of IATA Travel Pass

- Governments with the means to **verify the authenticity of tests or vaccinations** and the identity of those presenting their certificates;
- Airlines with the ability to **provide accurate information to their passengers on test requirements** and verify that a passenger meets the requirements for travel;
- Laboratories with the **means to issue certificates to passengers** that will be recognized by governments; and
- Travelers with **accurate information on test requirements**, where they can get tested or vaccinated, and the means to securely convey the results/certificates to airlines and border authorities

3.12 CAVE LION CUB FOUND IN SIBERIAN PERMAFROST IS 28,000 YEARS OLD

Recently, the scientists have said that an astonishingly well-preserved **cave lion cub found in Siberia's permafrost** lived 28,000 years ago and may even still have traces of its mother's milk in it.

Highlights

- The **female cub, named Sparta**, was found at the Semyuelyakh River in Russia's Yakutia region in 2018 and a **second lion cub called Boris** was found the year before.
- The **cubs were found 15 metres apart** but are not only from different litters but were also born thousands of years apart.
- The **two cubs aged 1-2 months** were found by mammoth tusk collectors.

Cave Lion

- It is a lion known from remains found in **European and English caves** and believed to be an **extinct variety** of the existing lion.
- It is **Panthera spelaea**, also known as the **Eurasian cave lion, European cave lion** or **steppe lion**.
- It is an **extinct Panthera species** that most likely evolved in Europe after the **third Cromerian interglacial stage**.
- **Felis spelaea** was the scientific name used by **Georg August Goldfuss in 1810** for a fossil lion skull that was excavated in a cave in southern Germany.
- The **carvings and cave paintings of cave lions**, which were discovered in the Lascaux and Chauvet Caves in France, were dated to 15,000 to 17,000 years old.
- It is also known from the **Löwenmensch figurine found in Vogelherd cave** in the Swabian Alb, southwest Germany, which dates to the Aurignacian culture.
- It formed a **contiguous population from Europe to Alaska** over the Bering land bridge, across the range of the mammoth steppe.
- It was **widely distributed from the Iberian Peninsula**, Southeast Europe, Great Britain, Central Europe, the East European Plain, and across most of northern Eurasia into Canada and Alaska.

Permafrost?

- Permafrost is a **permanently frozen layer** below Earth's surface.
- It consists of **soil, gravel, and sand**, usually bound together by ice.
- It usually **remains at or below 0°C (32°F)** for at least two years.
- It is found in areas where **temperatures rarely rise above freezing** which implies that it is often found in Arctic regions such as Greenland, the U.S. state of Alaska, Russia, China, and Eastern Europe.
- Permafrost covers approximately **22.8 million square kilometers** (about 8.8 million square miles) in Earth's Northern Hemisphere.

3.13 WHAT IS KANAL ISTANBUL, AND WHY IS ERDOGAN KEEN ON SEEING THE PROJECT THROUGH?

Recently, the **Kanal Istanbul Project**, once described by Erdogan himself as a "crazy project", is being seen as a lifeline for the leader, who has been at Turkey's helm since 2003.

Kanal Istanbul Project?

- It is an **under-construction shipping route** running parallel to the strategically critical **Bosphorus Strait**.
- The passage through the Strait has been governed by the **Montreux Convention**.
- It is a multilateral treaty that allows **ships to go across almost free of cost during peacetime**, and which tightly restricts the movement of naval vessels.
- It will run on the **European side of Bosphorus**.
- It will be **safer and faster to navigate compared to the Bosphorus** and making it a more attractive option for commercial ships, who will pay to pass through.

Criticism of Kanal Istanbul Project

- In April 2021, 104 retired admirals signed an open letter insisting that the **Montreux Convention is sacrosanct and should be left untouched**.
- Erdogan's political opponents blame him for using the project as a **ruse for diverting public attention away from Turkey's pandemic numbers**, soaring inflation and unemployment.
- The critics have also **pointed to investigative reports exposing real estate deals** in which buyers from the Middle East have picked up prime plots of land through which the canal will pass through.
- The Environmental experts fear that the canal would pose a **threat to Istanbul's water supply system of over four centuries**, as a wooded area that houses this system would have to be dug up.
- They also fear that the new artificial canal would **bring polluted waters of the Black Sea into the Sea of Marmara**, and ultimately in the Mediterranean.
- The industry experts have also expressed doubts about the project's viability, given the **recent fall in the number of ships** wanting to cross the Bosphorus.

Bosphorus Strait

- It is a **natural waterway that separates Europe and Asia**, which for centuries has served as a key outlet for Russian ships entering the Mediterranean Sea.
- It is located in **northwestern Turkey and separates Thrace from Anatolia**.
- It is the **narrowest strait** in the world, **connecting the Black Sea with the Sea of Marmara**.
- It is also known as the **Strait of Istanbul**.
- It links the **European part of the city from its Asian part** and thus remains as a very strategic waterway in the region.
- It has a significant place in the international maritime map as it is a **busy waterway that witnesses the presence of many ships** and oil tankers every day, in addition to the local fishing and passenger boats.
- The name “Bosphorus” was derived from the Ancient Greek word “Bosporos,” meaning “**cattle strait**” or “**ox ford**”.

3.14 WHAT IS SHARIAH LAW, AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR AFGHAN WOMEN?

Recently, the Taliban have pledged that women in Afghanistan will have rights “**within the bounds of Islamic law,**” or **Shariah**, under their newly established rule.

Shariah?

- The meaning of **Sharia** in Arabic is “**the way**”.
 - It **does not** refer to the legal system.
- It is a **broad set of moral and ethical principles** derived from the Quran and the practices and maxims of Prophet Muhammad.
- It is **based on the Quran**, stories of the Prophet Muhammad’s life and the rulings of religious scholars, forming the moral and legal framework of Islam.
- The Quran details a **path to a moral life**, but not a specific set of laws.
- One interpretation of Shariah could afford **women extensive rights**, while another could leave women with few.
- The interpretations of Shariah are a **matter of debate across the Muslim world**, and all groups and governments that base their legal systems on Shariah have done so differently.

Shariah prescribe?

- Shariah lists some **specific crimes, such as theft and adultery, and punishments** if accusations meet a standard of proof.
- It also **offers moral and spiritual guidance**, such as when and how to pray, or how to marry and divorce.
- It **does not forbid women to leave home** without a male escort or bar them from working in most jobs.

Interpretation of Shariah by Taliban

- When the **Taliban controlled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001**, they banned television and most musical instruments.
- They established a department for the **Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice** based on a Saudi model.
- **Restrictions on behavior, dress and movement were enforced by morality police officers**, who drove around in pickup trucks, publicly humiliating and whipping women who did not adhere to their rules.
- **Women accused of adultery** were stoned to death.

3.15 WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH HAWAII'S KILAUEA VOLCANO? WILL IT ERUPT AGAIN?

The ground at the summit of **Kilauea volcano in Hawaii** has been rumbling and swelling in recent days, prompting scientists to warn that the mountain could once again discharge lava.

Kilauea Volcano

- It overlaps the **E flank** of the **Mauna Loa shield volcano**.
- It is located the **southeastern-most volcano** in Hawaii.
- Its **East Rift Zone (ERZ)** has been intermittently active for at least 2,000 years.
- It is the second-youngest **product of the Hawaiian hotspot** and the current eruptive center of the Hawaiian–Emperor seamount chain.

Formation of Kilauea Volcano

- It was created as the **Pacific tectonic plate** moved over the **Hawaiian hotspot** in the Earth's underlying mantle.

- The Hawaii Island volcanoes are the most recent evidence of this process that, over 70 million years, has created the **6,000 km (3,700 mi)-long Hawaiian–Emperor seamount chain**.
- It is one of **five subaerial volcanoes** that make up the island of Hawaii, created by the Hawaiian hotspot.
- Kilauea started as a **submarine volcano**, gradually building itself up through underwater eruptions of alkali basalt lava before emerging from the sea with a series of explosive eruptions.

Reasons for Volcanic Eruption

- There are three types of volcanoes i.e. **active, dormant or extinct**.
- An eruption takes place when **magma (a thick flowing substance)**, that is formed when the **earth's mantle melts, rises to the surface**.
- As magma is lighter than rock, it is able to **rise through vents and fissures on the surface** of the earth.
- The **molten magma is called Lava** after eruption takes place.
- The explosiveness of volcano is dependent on the **composition of magma** which means:
 - When the **magma is runny and thin, gases can easily escape it** and the magma will flow out towards the surface.
 - If the **magma is thick and dense and gases cannot escape it**, it builds up pressure inside resulting in a violent explosion.

3.16 VACCINE TRAVEL LANE: SINGAPORE'S LATEST CONCEPT FOR COVID-19 VACCINATED FLIERS

There are several countries which have **ideated and experimented with various concepts to allow the movement of passengers** between nations post COVID-19.

- These include **air bubbles, vaccine passports, travel corridors** and even a traffic light system.
- The latest addition to this list is **Vaccinated Travel Lane (VTL)**, introduced by **Singapore**.

What are Vaccinated Travel Lanes (VTLs)?

- The VTLs are basically an **extension of travel corridors** albeit only for travellers who have been **fully vaccinated**.

- Singapore has established VTLs with **two jurisdictions i.e. Germany and Brunei Darussalam.**
- It is allowing **fully vaccinated passengers from these two places to arrive in Singapore** for any travel purpose without quarantine requirements.

Working of Vaccinated Travel Lanes (VTLs)

- Singapore will designate specific flights with the country on the other side of the lane only for passengers having a **Vaccinated Travel Pass (VTP) issued by the Singapore government.**
- The fully vaccinated passengers will be able to **apply for a VTP from September 1 for travel from September 8 onwards on the designated flights.**
- **Singapore citizens and permanent residents do not need to apply** for the VTP to travel back home under the VTL.

Provisions for travellers under Vaccinated Travel Lanes (VTLs)

- The travellers must be **fully vaccinated to apply** for a VTP.
 - It implies that an individual will be considered **fully vaccinated 14 days after they have received the full regimen of a vaccine** authorised by WHO for emergency use.
 - It includes the **Serum Institute of India's Covishield.**
- Applications for a VTP must be made between **seven to 30 calendar days before the intended date of entry** into Singapore.
- The **quarantine requirements have been done away with** for passengers arriving on VTL flights.
- The passengers must still get **an RT-PCR test done 48 hours ahead of the scheduled departure time** and prepay for their **post-arrival Day 3 and Day 7 Covid-19 PCR tests** when applying for the VTP.
- It is also important to note that **travellers to Singapore must have only been to their country or region of departure** and/or Singapore in the last 21 consecutive days before departing for Singapore.

4.1 LOK SABHA PASSES AIRPORTS ECONOMIC REGULATORY AUTHORITY BILL WITHOUT DEBATE

The Lok Sabha has passed the **Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India (AERA) Amendment Bill, 2021** without debate.

- The amendment bill aims to amend the **Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India Act, 2008**.

Major Highlights:

- The AERA Bill was first introduced in the Lok Sabha in March 2021, but was subsequently referred to a **standing committee**, which submitted its report on 22 July.
 - The report noted that **tariffs for smaller airports** will be unreasonably high if determined on a standalone basis.
- An enabling provision for AERA to determine tariff for a group of airports is proposed by amending the **definition of major airports**.
 - Under the present Act, a "**major airport**" has been defined to mean any airport which has annual passengers in **excess of 35 lakh**.
 - However, the Act **does not provide** for determination of tariff for a group of airports. This **would be possible** after the amendment.
- The amendment will allow the **Airports Economic Regulatory Authority (AERA)** to regulate tariff and other charges for aeronautical services.
 - This can be done for airports with **annual passenger traffic** of more than 35 lakh and **group of airports too**.
 - It would help **encourage development** of smaller airports.
- Once the Bill becomes a law, the government will be able to **club profitable and non-profitable airports** as a package for privatisation.
 - This is done to make **non-profitable ones** more attractive for investment under the public-private partnership or **PPP model**.

Role of AERA:

- With the **advent of private players in the airport sector** in 2006, there was a risk of monopoly by them.
- To counter this, the **Airports Economic Regulatory Authority of India** was established in 2008 under the **AERA Act 2008**.
 - Before AERA, the **Airports Authority of India** – functioning under the civil aviation ministry – was in charge of monitoring services at airports.

- AERA is charged with **regulating tariff** and **other charges** for aeronautical services in airports and to also **monitor the performance** standards of airports.
- Other charges of the body include **development** and **passenger service fee**, air traffic management, ground handling services, landing and parking of aircraft.

4.2 PM MODI TO LAUNCH e-RUPI DIGITAL PAYMENT SOLUTION

Recently, the Prime Minister's Office has announced that the Prime Minister will launch the **digital payment solution e-RUPI** on 2nd August.

e-RUPI

- It is a **person and purpose specific** digital payment solution.
- It is a **cashless and contactless instrument for digital payment**.
- It is a **QR code or SMS string-based e-Voucher**, which is delivered to the mobile of the beneficiaries.
- It has been developed by **National Payments Corporation of India on its UPI platform**, in collaboration with the **Department of Financial Services, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare** and **National Health Authority**.
- Any corporate or government agency will have to **approach the partner banks, which are both private and public-sector lenders**, with the details of specific persons and the purpose for which payments have to be made.
- The beneficiaries will be **identified using their mobile number and a voucher allocated by a bank** to the service provider in the name of a given person would only be delivered to that person.
- It **backed by the existing Indian rupee as the underlying asset** and specificity of its purpose makes it different to a virtual currency and puts it closer to a voucher-based payment system.

Significance of e-RUPI

- The users will be able to **redeem the voucher without a card, digital payments app or internet banking access**, at the service provider.
- It **connects the sponsors of the services with the beneficiaries and service providers** in a digital manner without any physical interface.
- It ensures that the payment to the service provider is **made only after the transaction is completed**.
- It assures **timely payment to the service provider** without involvement of any intermediary.

- It is expected to be a revolutionary initiative in the **direction of ensuring a leak-proof delivery of welfare services**.
- It can be **used for delivering services under schemes** meant for providing drugs and nutritional support under Mother and Child welfare schemes, TB eradication programmes, drugs & diagnostics under schemes like Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, fertilizer subsidies etc.

4.3 DEEPAK DAS TAKES OVER AS CONTROLLER GENERAL OF ACCOUNTS

Recently, Shri Deepak Das took charge as the new **Controller General of Accounts (CGA)**.

Controller General of Accounts (CGA)

- It is in the **Department of Expenditure**, Ministry of Finance.
- It is the **Principal Accounting Adviser** to Government of India.
- It is responsible for **establishing and maintaining a technically sound** Management Accounting System.
- It prepares **monthly and annual analysis of expenditure, revenues, borrowings and various fiscal indicators** for the Union Government.
- The **Annual Appropriation Accounts (Civil) and Union Finance Accounts** are submitted to Parliament under **Article 150 of the Constitution**.
- Its goal is to provide **reliable information that brings transparency in the use and reporting of public funds** through an integrated government-wide financial information system.

Mandate of Controller General of Accounts (CGA)

- It derives his **mandate from Article 150 of the Constitution**.
- Its **statutory mandate** as incorporated in the **Allocation of Business Rules 1961** brings out the duties and responsibilities of CGA as below:
 - General principles of Government accounting relating to Union or State Governments and form of accounts, and framing or revision of rules and manuals relating thereto;
 - Reconciliation of cash balance of Union Government with Reserve Bank in general and, in particular, of Reserve Deposits pertaining to Civil Ministries or Departments;
 - Overseeing the maintenance of adequate standards of accounting by Central Civil Accounts Offices;
 - Consolidation of monthly accounts, preparation of review of trends of revenue realization and significant features of expenditure etc and preparation of annual accounts (including Summary, Civil

Appropriation Accounts) showing under the respective heads, the annual receipts and disbursements for the purpose of the Union Government;

- Administration of Central Treasury Rules and Central Government Account (Receipt and Payment Rules 1983);
- Coordination and assistance in the introduction of management accounting system in Civil Ministries or Departments;
- Cadre management of Group 'A' (Indian Civil Accounts Service) and Group 'B' Officers of the Central Civil Accounts Offices;
- Matters relating to the Central Civil Accounts staff belonging to Group 'C' and 'D'; and
- Disbursement of Pension through Public Sector Banks (PSBs) in respect of Central Civil Pensioners, Freedom Fighters, High Court Judges, Ex-M.P.s and Ex-Presidents.

4.4 PRALHAD JOSHI CALLS FOR RESTRUCTURING NATIONAL MINERAL EXPLORATION TRUST AS AUTONOMOUS BODY

Recently, the Union Minister of Coal, Mines and Parliamentary Affairs has urged the officials of the Ministry of Mines to bring about further momentum in restructuring the **National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET)** as an autonomous body.

National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET)

- It was **established by the Government of India in 2015**, in pursuance of sub-section (1) of Section 9C of the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957**.
- The office of the **Trust is situated in the Ministry of Mines, New Delhi**.
- It has a **two tier structure**:
 - The apex body is the **Governing Body**, chaired by the Honorable Minister of Mines. It holds the overall control of the Trust.
 - The **Executive Committee**, chaired by Secretary, Ministry of Mines, administers and manages its activities.
- The **NMET Fund receives money from holders of mining lease or a prospecting licence-cum-mining lease**, an amount equivalent to two percent of royalty paid in terms of the Second Schedule of the MMDR Act.
- It supports **regional and detailed mineral exploration in the country** and other activities approved by the Governing Body, to achieve its objects.

- It is a body working to **realize the mineral potential of the country** in terms of mining activity and contribute commensurately to the growth of national economy.

Need for restructuring National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET)

- The Ministry pointed out that in a resource rich country like India all **efforts should be made to give further fillip to mineral exploration** so that imports can be curtailed.
- The Ministry stressed upon the **need to focus on exploration of gold and rare earths along with other segments** of India's mineral exploration efforts.
- It is important to **streamline the system of extending financial assistance to states**, especially the mineral rich states for enhanced exploration.

Objectives of National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET)

- The **NMET fund** is being utilized to:
 - Undertaking studies for mineral development;
 - Regional and detailed exploration with special emphasis to strategic and critical minerals;
 - Aerial geophysical survey of obvious geological potential (OGP) and adjoining areas of India; and
 - Sustainable mining with adoption of advanced scientific and technological practices and mineral extraction metallurgy.
- It also **facilitates exploration activities in such a manner that areas explored can be taken up** for grant of mineral concessions in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

4.5 RAKESH JHUNJHUNWALA'S NEW AIRLINE MAY GIVE BOEING A CHANCE TO REGAIN LOST GROUND

Recently, the Indian airlines space is gearing up for entry of two airlines i.e. **Jet Airways 2.0**, and **Rakesh Jhunjhunwala-backed Akasa**.

Akasa?

- It is an upcoming "**ultra low-cost carrier**" or ULCC.
- It is being **launched by stock market investor Rakesh Jhunjhunwala**, who will hold a **40% stake in the airline** company.
- It is planned to **launch the airline by April 2022**, and has on-boarded aviation industry veterans to run the airline.

- The airline expects to be granted a **no-objection certificate from the Ministry of Civil Aviation.**

Genesis of India's Airline Space

- InterGlobe Aviation Ltd-run budget airline **IndiGo is India's largest airline with over 54% market share in the domestic passenger market** followed by state-owned Air India, SpiceJet, GoAir, Vistara and AirAsia India.
- GoAir, which has filed papers for its **initial public offering**, recently rebranded itself to GoFirst and plans to revamp its business model to become a ULCC.
- The **upheaval of the Indian airline industry has largely been on the back of deep losses** reported in 2020-21 (April-March) because of Covid-19.
- The **massive, perennial losses have created a debt trap** which has resulted in most airlines having very limited means of recapitalisation.

ULCC model?

- In the ULCC airline business model, **the company focusses on keeping operating costs even lower than typical budget airlines** like IndiGo and SpiceJet.
- In the low-cost model, **airlines unbundle certain amenities that are usually associated with the full-service airline experience** like seat selection, food and beverages, etc.
- In the ultra low-cost model, there is an even further **unbundling of services like checked-in baggage, cabin baggage**, etc.
- While LCCs operate with **significantly lower fares and only somewhat lower costs than full-service carriers**, ULCCs operate with minimal costs to ensure profitability.

4.6 PRADHAN MANTRI MUDRA YOJANA (PMMY)

Recently, the Union Minister of State for Finance has stated that **Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)** and **Stand-Up India Scheme (SUPI)** are the flagship Schemes implemented by Department of Financial Services (DFS) for extending loans to entrepreneurs.

- The Ministry stated that as per data uploaded by Member Lending Institutions (MLIs) on Mudra portal, as on 31.03.2021, **over 29.55 crore loans amounting to Rs. 15.52 lakh crore have been sanctioned** under PMMY across the country.

Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY)

- It is a **scheme launched by the Prime Minister** in 2015.
- It is aimed at providing **loans up to 10 lakh to the non-corporate, non-farm small/micro enterprises** which are classified as MUDRA loans under PMMY.
- Under PMMY, the loans are given by **Commercial Banks, RRBs, Small Finance Banks, MFIs and NBFCs**.
- Under the aegis of PMMY, MUDRA has created three products namely '**Shishu**', '**Kishore**' and '**Tarun**'.
- It aims to **signify the stage of growth / development and funding needs of the beneficiary micro unit / entrepreneur** and also provide a reference point for the next phase of graduation / growth.
- The loans under Mudra scheme are **collateral/security free offered by financial institutions with the repayment tenure** from 12 months to 5 years with flexible EMIs.

Components of PMMY

- **Shishu (Covering loans upto Rs. 50,000/-):** This stage would cater to entrepreneurs who are either in their primitive stage or require lesser funds in order to get their businesses started.
- **Kishor (Covering loans upto Rs. 5 lakh):** This section of entrepreneurs would belong to either those who have already started their business and want additional funds to mobilize their business.
- **Tarun (Covering loans upto Rs. 10 lakh):** If an entrepreneur meets the required eligibility conditions, he/she could apply loan for upto Rs.10 lakhs.
 - It would be the **highest level of amount that an entrepreneur could apply** for a startup loan.

Eligibility under PMMY

- Any Indian Citizen who has a **business plan for a non-farm income generating activity** such as manufacturing, processing, trading or service sector whose credit need is up to Rs 10 lakh
- The **usual terms and conditions of the lending agency** may have to be followed for availing of loans under PMMY.

Benefits of Mudra Loan

- Mudra loans are majorly **offered to individuals, retailers, shopkeepers, traders, vendors, and MSMEs** engaged in the manufacturing, trading and service sectors, only
- Mudra scheme is covered under **Credit Guarantee Schemes** from Govt. of India
- Borrowed amount can also be used as **term loans, working capital loans and overdraft facilities**
- **All Non-farm enterprises**, i.e. small or micro firms engaged in the income generating activities **can avail Mudra loans**
- **Mudra loans** can also be availed by **people belonging to SC/ST category** at concessional interest rates
- Mudra card is a type of debit card that is **offered to borrowers that can be used to withdraw loan amount**, as per the business requirements. The loan amount can be withdrawn in portions via Mudra card from the total sanctioned amount

4.7 Government launched 'SabkiYojnaSabka Vikas' campaign for inclusive and holistic preparation of Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP)

Recently, the Union Minister of State for Panchayati Raj has informed about the 'Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas' campaign.

Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas Campaign

- It was **launched from October 2020** for inclusive and holistic preparation of **Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP)**.
- The objectives of 'Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas' broadly include **strengthening of elected representatives and Self Help Groups**, evidence based assessment of progress made in 2020-21 and proposals for 2021-22 in all 29 subjects of XI Schedule.
- It is aimed to **help Gram Panchayats (GPs) in preparation of convergent and holistic GPDP** through identification of sectoral infrastructural gaps in respective areas.
- The **approval of GPDP for the year 2021-22**, well in advance, will provide GPs full year for implementation and effective monitoring of works.
- It is an effective strategy for **ensuring the preparation of GPDP in a campaign mode by endeavouring** to converge all resources available at Panchayat level related to 29 subjects listed in the Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution.

- No separate allocation has been earmarked for **Sabki Yojana Sabka Vikas to States/UTs including State of Haryana, Assam and Bihar.**

Constitutional Provisions for Panchayats

- **Under Article 243 G** of Constitution, Panchayats have been mandated for preparation and implementation of plans for economic development and social justice.
- **Article 243A:** A Gram Sabha may exercise such powers and perform such functions at the village level as the Legislature of a State may, by law, provide.
- **Article-243B:** Constitution of Panchayats- (1) There shall be constituted in every State, Panchayats at the village, intermediate and district levels in accordance with the provisions of this Part.
 - (2) Notwithstanding anything in clause (1), Panchayats at the intermediate level may not be constituted in a State having a population not exceeding twenty lakhs.
- **Article-243C:** Composition of Panchayats- (1) Subject to the provisions of this Part, the Legislature of a State may, by law, make provisions with respect to the composition of Panchayats:
 - Provided that the ratio between the population of the territorial area of a Panchayat at any level and the number of seats in such Panchayat to be filled by election shall, so far as practicable, be the same throughout the State.
 - (2) All the seats in a Panchayat shall be filled by persons chosen by direct election from territorial constituencies in the Panchayat area and, for this purpose, each Panchayat area shall be divided into territorial constituencies in such manner that the ratio between the population of each constituency and the number of seats allotted to it shall, so far as practicable, be the same throughout the Panchayat area.
- **Article-243D:** Reservation of seats- (1) Seats shall be reserved for:
 - (a) the Scheduled Castes; and
 - (b) the Scheduled Tribes, in every Panchayat and the number of seats so reserved shall bear the same proportion to the total number of seats to be filled by direct election in that Panchayat as the population of the Scheduled Castes or of the Scheduled Tribes in that Panchayat area bears to the total population of that area and such seats may be allotted by rotation to different constituencies in a Panchayat.
 - (2) Not less than one-third of the total number of seats reserved under clause (1) shall be reserved for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes or, as the case may be, the Scheduled Tribes.

4.8 INDIA'S FIRST INDIGENOUS AIRCRAFT CARRIER BEGINS SEA TRIALS

Recently, the Prime Minister has congratulated Indian Navy and Cochin Shipyard limited for maiden sea sortie by the **Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC-1) 'Vikrant'**.

Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC) 1

- It is the **first aircraft carrier** designed and built in India.
- An aircraft carrier is one of the most potent marine assets for a nation, which **enhances a Navy's capability to travel far from its home shores** to carry out air domination operations.
- It is usually **escorted** in the group by destroyers, missile cruisers, frigates, submarines, and supply ships.
- It has been designed by the **Indian Navy's Directorate of Naval Design (DND)**, and is being built at **Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL)**.
- **Over 76 per cent of the material and equipment** on board IAC-1 is indigenous.
 - It includes **23,000 tonnes of steel, 2,500 km of electric cables, 150 km of pipes, and 2,000 valves, and a wide range of finished products** including rigid hull boats, galley equipment, air-conditioning and refrigeration plants, and steering gear.

Importance of Indigenous Aircraft Carrier (IAC)

- The experts consider that having an **aircraft carrier as essential to be considered a 'blue water' navy** i.e. one that has the capacity to project a nation's strength and power across the high seas.
- An aircraft carrier generally leads as the **capital ship of a carrier strike/battle group**.
- India has joined the **elite club where only five or six nations** currently have the capability of manufacturing an aircraft carrier.
- The Navy calculates that about **80-85 per cent of the project cost of approximately Rs 23,000 crore has been ploughed back** into the Indian economy.
- It will offer an **incomparable military instrument with its ability to project Air Power over long distances**, including Air Interdiction, Anti-Surface Warfare, offensive and defensive Counter-Air, Airborne Anti-Submarine Warfare and Airborne Early Warning.

IAC-1 will be named INS Vikrant?

- INS Vikrant, a **Majestic-class 19,500-tonne warship**, was the name of India's much-loved first aircraft carrier.

- It was a source of **immense national pride over several decades of service** before it was decommissioned in 1997.
- India **acquired the Vikrant from the United Kingdom** in 1961, and the carrier played a stellar role in the 1971 war with Pakistan that led to the birth of Bangladesh.
- It was **deployed in the Bay of Bengal, and its two air squadrons of Sea Hawk fighter jets and Alize surveillance aircraft** were used in strikes on ports, merchant ships, and other targets.

Weapons and Equipments in new Vikrant

- The new warship is **comparable to India's existing carrier INS Vikramaditya**, which is a 44,500-tonne vessel and can carry up to 34 aircraft, including both fighter jets and helicopters.
- The IAC-1 will be the **most potent sea-based asset**, which will operate the **Russian-made MiG-29K fighter aircraft** and **Kamov-31 Air Early Warning Helicopters**.
- It will operate the soon-to-be-inducted **MH-60R Seahawk multirole helicopter** manufactured by the American aerospace and defence company Lockheed Martin.
- It will also operate the **Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH)** built by Bengaluru-based Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd.

4.9 CBIC LAUNCHES CUSTOMS COMPLIANCE INFORMATION PORTAL

Recently, the **Central Board for Indirect Taxes & Customs (CBIC)** has launched the **Indian Customs Compliance Information Portal (CIP)**.

Indian Customs Compliance Information Portal (CIP)

- It is a **pan India map** showing all the **Customs seaports, airports, land customs stations** etc.
- It also contains **addresses of the regulatory agencies** and their websites.
- It is a **tool developed by CBIC** to empower our business as well as any interested person with up-to-date information on the **legal and procedural requirements of Customs and Partner Government Agencies**.
- It is aimed at **providing free access to information on all Customs procedures and regulatory compliance** for nearly 12,000 Customs Tariff Items.
- It would provide **complete knowledge of all import and export related requirements for all items covered** under the Customs Tariff thereby improving the ease of doing cross border trade.

- For using CIP, one can simply enter either the **Customs Tariff Heading (CTH) or the description of the goods in question** to get information to step-by-step procedures, regulatory compliances requirements like License, Certificates, etc., for imports as well as exports.
- The information about **import-export through post and courier, re-import and re-export, project imports, import of samples and self-sealing facility** available for exporters are also hosted on this portal.
- It also hosts the **list of customs stations, land customs stations, seaports and airports across India** by allowing users to choose from the map.
- The portal validates **import-export code, authorised dealer code and goods and services tax** identification number.
- It has a **tool built into it that allows users to obtain necessary information** about the import or export of a particular tariff item free of cost.
- It increases awareness among **Indian businesses to self-understand the procedures and their duty liabilities** without being dependant on experts for the same.

Features of Compliance Information Portal

- Once the user login to **Compliance Information Portal** the information can be obtained by entering either of the following
 - Customs Tariff Heading
 - Description of Commodity
- This **new portal covers three stages** of Import and Export
 - Prepare for Import and Export
 - Pre-Import and Pre-Export
 - Import and Export
- Provides stage-wise **detailed process flow chart for all procedures** of export for exporting any commodity covered under the Customs Tariff Act, 1975.
- The process flow chart **covers all basic steps required from preparing for import** to Out of Charge from Customs at Import stage.
- The process flow chart **covers all basic steps required from preparing for export** to Export General Manifest when the goods are exported.
- The Process flow chart also **provides information about the requirement of necessary permissions/clearances** or requirement of Licenses/Permits/Certificates/Other Authorizations (LPCOs) to be obtained from any Partner Government Agency (PGA) for imports as well as exports.

- The portal provides web-links of all **Partner Government Agencies whose intervention is required** for importing or exporting a commodity at any stage.
- The portal strives to **provide every important detail of each step of the process flow chart** to enable the trader to get all necessary information without physically interacting with the Partner Government Agencies. Such as:
 - Step description
 - Requirement description
 - Laws/Regulations Governing the step
 - Supporting documents required for the step
 - Location and Telephone Numbers where the step is carried out

4.10 PM approves ex-gratia from PMNRF for MP rains and floods victims

Recently, the Prime Minister has approved an ex-gratia of Rs. 2 lakh from **Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF)** to be given to the next of kin of those who lost their lives due to rains and floods in Madhya Pradesh.

Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF)

- It was established in pursuance of an appeal by the then **Prime Minister, Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru in January, 1948** with public contributions to assist displaced persons from Pakistan.
- The fund consists **entirely of public contributions** and **does not get any budgetary support**.
- The corpus of the fund is **invested in various forms with scheduled commercial banks** and other agencies.
- The disbursements are made with the **approval of the Prime Minister**.
- It has **not been constituted** by the Parliament.
- The fund is recognized as a **Trust under the Income Tax Act** and the same is managed by Prime Minister or multiple delegates for national causes.
- The **Prime Minister is the Chairman of PMNRF** and is assisted by Officers/ Staff on honorary basis.

Contributions under PMNRF

- It **accepts only voluntary donations** by individuals and institutions.

- The contributions flowing out of budgetary sources of Government or from the balance sheets of the public sector undertakings are **not accepted**.
- The conditional contributions, where the donor specifically mentions that the amount is meant for a particular purpose, **are not accepted in the Fund**.

Tax exemptions on contribution to PMNRF

- It is **exempted under Income Tax Act, 1961** under Section 10 and 139 for return purposes.
- The **contributions towards PMNRF are notified for 100% deduction** from taxable income under section 80(G) of the Income Tax Act, 1961.

Purpose of Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF)

- Its resources are now **utilized primarily** to render immediate relief to:
 - The **families of those killed in natural calamities** like floods, cyclones and earthquakes, etc. and
 - The **victims of the major accidents and riots**
- The assistance from PMNRF is also rendered, to **partially defray the expenses for medical treatment** like heart surgeries, kidney transplantation, cancer treatment and acid attack etc.

4.11 AT 19,300 FT, BRO COMPLETES CONSTRUCTION OF WORLD'S HIGHEST MOTORABLE ROAD IN LADAKH

Recently, the BRO has constructed the **highest motorable road** in the world in **Eastern Ladakh**.

Highlights

- The BRO has **constructed and black-topped the highest motorable road** in the world at 19,300 ft at **Umlingla Pass in Eastern Ladakh**.
- It has constructed a **52-km long tarmac road through Umlingla Pass**, bettering the previous record of a road in **Bolivia connecting to its volcano Uturuncu** at 18,953 ft.
- The road now connects the important towns in **Chumar sector of Eastern Ladakh**.
- It will prove to be a boon to the local population as it offers an **alternate direct route connecting Chisumle and Demchok** from Leh.
- It will **enhance the socio-economic condition** and promote tourism in Ladakh.

- It has been constructed at an **altitude higher than the Mt Everest Base Camps** as the South Base Camp in Nepal is at an altitude of 17,598 ft, while North Base Camp in Tibet is at 16,900 ft.
- It has been **constructed much above the altitude of Siachen Glacier** which is at 17,700 ft.
 - The **Khardung La Pass** in Leh is at an altitude of 17,582 ft.
- It has been achieved by the BRO as part of **“Project Himank”**.

Umlingla Pass

- It is located at an **altitude of 19,300ft** in the union territory of Ladakh.
- It is stretching to a distance of almost 86km which **connects Chisumle and Demchok villages**.

Project Himank

- It is a project of the **Border Roads Organisation (BRO) in the Ladakh region** of northernmost India that started in August 1985.
- Under Project Himank, the BRO is **responsible for the construction and maintenance of roads** and related infrastructure in Ladakh along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).
- It ensures **access to sensitive military areas** including the world's highest battleground at the Siachen Glacier and Pangong Tso Lake.
- It constructed the **world's highest Bailey bridge at Khardung La**, though this has been subsequently replaced by a causeway.

4.12 Ladakh Begins 'PaniMaah' Campaign

Recently, the **Union Territory of Ladakh** has launched **'PaniMaah' Campaign**.

PaniMaah Campaign

- It is a **month-long campaign** to increase the pace of implementation of **Jal Jeevan Mission in Ladakh**.
- It aims to **inform and engage village communities** on the importance of clean water.
- It will **run at the Block and Panchayat level** in two phases.
 - The **first phase** will run from 1st to 14th August and the **second phase** will run from 16th to 30th August, 2021.

- It will adopt a three-pronged approach i.e. **focussing on water quality testing, planning and strategizing water supply**, and **seamless functioning of Pani Sabha** in villages.
- The village communities will be **encouraged to send water samples to water quality laboratories for quality checks** and monitoring under PaniMaah Campaign.

Phases of PaniMaah Campaign

- The phase 1 will focus on **SwachhtaSarvekshan and Sanitation drives** by Village Water and Sanitation Committee (VWSC)/ Pani Samiti members.
 - During this phase **water sample will be collected from all identified sources** and service delivery points for testing.
 - The first phase will also **include awareness and sensitisation campaigns**.
- Phase two of 'PaniMaah' will focus on **organizing the PaniSabhas/ Gram Sabhas/ Block level meetings** and door to door visits for effective communication on water quality and service delivery under JJM.
 - During this phase, **Jal Jeevan Mission implementation, water quality test reports and analysis** will be discussed with the villagers in an open forum.
 - A village/ block-wise schedule have also been prepared for water sample collection and the **Gram Sabhas to ensure maximum participation of villagers** in the campaign.

4.13 RAJIV GANDHI KHEL RATNA AWARD WILL BE CALLED MAJOR DHYAN CHAND KHEL RATNA AWARD: PRIME MINISTER

Recently, the Union Home Minister has welcomed the decision of the Prime Minister to rename the **Khel Ratna Award** as the **Major Dhyan Chand Khel Ratna Award**.

Khel Ratna Award

- It is the **highest sporting honour** of India.
- It was **instituted in 1991-92** and awarded annually by the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports**.
- It was officially known as **Rajiv Gandhi Khel Ratna Award** in Sports and Games.
- The award comprises a **medallion, a certificate, and a cash prize of ₹ 25 lakh**.
- The first recipient of the Khel Ratna was **chess legend Viswanathan Anand**.
- The recipient(s) is/are **selected by a committee constituted by the Ministry** and is honoured for their spectacular and most outstanding performance in the field of sports over a period of four years at international level.

Nominations for Khel Ratna Award

- The nominations for the award are received from all government recognised **National Sports Federations, the Indian Olympic Association, the Sports Authority of India (SAI), the Sports Promotion and Control Boards, and the state and the union territory governments** with not more than two eligible sportspersons nominated for each sports discipline.
- In case of cricket, the nominations are **received from the Board of Control for Cricket in India** and **SAI is authorised to submit the nominations** on behalf of all the de-recognised or under suspension National Sports Federations.
- Any sportsperson who is **either penalised or being enquired for usage of drugs** or substances banned by the World Anti-Doping Agency is **not eligible** for the award.
- The **twelve member committee** consists of:
 - A Chairperson nominated by the Ministry;
 - Four Olympians or previous recipients of Khel Ratna or Arjuna Award;
 - Three sports journalists/experts/commentators;
 - One sportsperson/expert/administrator associated with parasports;
 - One sports administrator;



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- The Director General of SAI; and
- The Joint Secretary of Department of Sports

Major Dhyan Chand

- He was known as **'The Wizard'** in field hockey.
- He played **international hockey from 1926 to 1949**, scoring over 400 goals in his career.
- He was part of the **Olympic team that won gold medals** in 1928, 1932 and 1936.
- He has been conferred with several honours, including **India's third highest civilian honour of Padma Bhushan** in 1956.
- The **Dhyan Chand Award for Life-time Achievement in Sports and Games** was introduced in 2002.
- It honours Indians who have **contributed to sports by their performance and continue to help promote sports** even after their retirement from active sporting careers.

4.14 OIL MINISTRY LAUNCHES SIXTH BID ROUND OF OPEN ACREAGE LICENSING PROGRAMME (OALP)

Recently, the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has launched the sixth bid round under the liberal **open acreage licensing programme (OALP)**.

Open Acreage Licensing Programme (OALP)?

- It has been launched under the **Hydrocarbon Exploration Licensing Policy (HELP)**.
- It would be manifested through **National Data Repository** which will provide rapid jumpstart to E&P activities by providing seamless access to the country's entire G&G data for interpretation and analysis.
- It offered the **potential investors freedom to carve out blocks of their choice** through submission of Expression of Interest (EoI).
 - The EoI window is **open round the year and the investors need to wait** for periodic launch of bid rounds.
- Under the OALP, once an **explorer selects areas after evaluating the National Data Repository (NDR)** and submits the EoI, it is to be put up for competitive bidding and the entity offering the maximum share of oil and gas to the government is awarded the block.

- It provides **uniform licences for exploration and production of all forms of hydrocarbons**, enabling contractors to explore conventional as well as unconventional oil and gas resources.
- The fields are offered under a **revenue-sharing model and throw up marketing and pricing freedom for crude oil** and natural gas produced.

Hydrocarbon Exploration & Licensing Policy (HELP)

- Hydrocarbon Exploration Licensing Policy (HELP) for **award of acreages in the upstream sector** in India was approved by the Cabinet in 2016.
- The licensing programme under HELP adopted the **Revenue Sharing Model**.
- It is a step towards improving the **‘Ease of Doing Business’** in the **Indian Exploration and Production (E&P) sector**.
- It comes with **attractive and liberal terms like reduced royalty rates and no oil cess**, marketing and pricing freedom, submission of Expression of Interests (EoIs) round the year.
- It is a single license to cover **conventional and unconventional hydrocarbon resources**.

Salient Features of the Hydrocarbon Exploration & Licensing Policy (HELP)

- Single License for all Hydrocarbons
- Revenue Sharing Model
- Pricing & Marketing Freedom
- Low Royalty Rates (Varies from 2% in Ultra-Deep Offshore to 12.5% On land)
- Further concession in Royalty Rates for Early Production
- Exploration rights on all retained area for full contract life
- Flexibility for multiple FDP revisions
- Simplified Dispute Resolution Mechanism
- Management Committee Role Revised to Reduced Number of Approvals

4.15 EXHIBITION TO MARK THE 79TH ANNIVERSARY OF ‘QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT’ INAUGURATED AS PART OF AZADI KA AMRIT MAHOTSAV CELEBRATION

Recently, the Union Minister of Culture, Tourism, and Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER) has inaugurated an exhibition to mark the 79th anniversary of the '**Quit India Movement**' at National Archives of India.

Highlights

- The exhibition on 'Quit India Movement' has been put up at the **National Archives of India** as part of '**Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav**' being celebrated to commemorate 75 years of Independence.
- The exhibition aims to **depict the importance of the Quit India Movement in India's freedom struggle** through public records, private letters, maps, photographs and other relevant material.
- The exhibition has several segments which outline the **circumstances leading to the Quit India Movement, how it became a mass movement, the heroes of Quit India, impact on the ground, imprint of the movement, atrocities by the colonial rulers and its consequences** among others.

Circumstances that led to Quit India Movement

- **Failure of Cripps Mission**
 - It was the collapse of Cripps Mission that was to discuss the British Government's Draft Declaration on the Constitution of India with representative Indian leaders.
 - The Cripps Mission failed and the issue of India's constitution was postponed until the end of the war.
- **Involvement of India in World War II without prior consultation with the leaders**
 - The Indian Nationalists were disgruntled with the Governor-General of India, Lord Linlithgow, as he brought India to the verge of World War II without consulting them.
 - Indian National Congress did not sink in with the assumption of Britishers that India will provide unconditional support in World War II.
- **Prevalence of anti-British sentiment**
 - The sentiment of anti-British and full-independence had gained popularity among the Indian masses.
- **Shortage of essential commodities**
 - The expenses during World War II had led to the shattering of Indian Economy.
- **Centralisation of many small movements**
 - The Ground for the movement was already prepared by various associated and affiliated bodies of the Congress, like Forward Bloc, All India Kisan Sabha, and others.

- They were leading the mass movements on a much more radical level for more than two decades.

Quit India Movement

- It was also known as the **Bharat ChhodoAndolan**.
 - It also went on to be known as **August Kranti** or **August Movement**.
- It was **launched by Mahatma Gandhi on August 8, 1942** at the Bombay session of the All India Congress Committee (AICC).
- It demanded an **end to British rule** in India.
- It is very well known that Gandhi delivered his speech, which commenced the Quit India Movement, at **Mumbai's Gowalia Tank Maidan**, popularly known as **August Kranti Maidan**.
- The **'Do or Die' speech** was etched in the hearts of Indians, and many faced the consequences of the movement.
- **'Quit India' term** was coined by **Yusuf Meher Ali**, a freedom fighter and socialist leader who also served as Mumbai's mayor.

Events in Quit India Movement

- **Abdul Kalam Azad, Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, and Jawaharlal Nehru were arrested** just before the movement started.
 - **Aruna Asaf Ali presided** over the remainder of the Congress session in the absence of prominent leaders.
- It was declared as an **unlawful association by Lord Linlithgow** who was then the Viceroy of India, adopted the policy of violence to curb the movement.
- The **call for mass agitation coupled with the arrests of leaders** led to the outbreak of violence in various parts of the country.
- **Arrests, public flogging, mass fines and detentions** followed in an attempt to suppress the movement.

4.16 Gujarat govt repackages Maadar-e-Vatan scheme, raises share of NRI contributions

Recently, the **Gujarat government** has repackaged the **Maadar-e-Vatan Scheme**.

Maadar-e-Vatan Scheme

- It was **launched in the 2020** annual budget to **encourage non-resident Indians (NRI)** to partner with the government for **village-level projects**.
- The word **Maadar-e-Vatan** means **motherland** and ‘**Maadar-e**’ in Persian means **mother**.
 - It was launched as “**Vatan Prem Yojana**”.
- Under the scheme, an equal partnership of the state government and NRI in the terms has been changed to **60 per cent share of the NRI and 40 per cent of the state government**.
 - The earlier version of the **scheme saw 50:50 contribution with state government contributing equal amount** of money donated by an NRI for development works in the village.
- It was announced during the “**Vikas Divas**” celebrations to mark the completion of five years of Vijay Rupani government in Gujarat.
- Under the scheme, the Gujarat government has **given a beautiful opportunity to Gujaratis living across the globe** to participate in the development of their country.
- It would **cover village-level projects** such as Smart Class in schools, community hall, primary health centre, Anganwadi, library, CCTV surveillance system, water recycling, drainage, sewage treatment, beautification of ponds, bus-stand and solar energy powered streetlights.
- Under a new clause of the Vatan Prem Yojana, **a governing body headed by the chief minister and an executive committee** will be created.

4.17 SYSTEM FOR PENSION ADMINISTRATION RAKSHA

Recently, the Ministry of Defence has provided state-wise number of beneficiaries using the **System for Pension Administration Raksha (SPARSH)**.

SPARSH (System for Pension Administration Raksha)?

- It is an integrated system for **automation of sanction and disbursement** of defence pension.
- It is a **web-based system which processes pension claims and credits pension directly into the bank accounts** of defence pensioners without relying on any external intermediary.
- It is an **end-to-end Online System** facilitating and easing every aspect of Defence Pensions from Initiation to Disbursement.

- It is being implemented for **meeting the pension sanction and disbursement requirements** for Armed Forces viz. Army, Navy, Air Force and Defence Civilians.
- It will be administered by the **Defence Accounts Department** through the Principal Controller of Defence Accounts (Pensions), Prayagraj.

Significance of SPARSH

- It is **available for pensioners to view their pension related information**, access services and register complaints for redressal of grievances, if any, relating to their pension matters.
- It envisages **establishment of Service Centres to provide last mile connectivity** to pensioners who may be unable to directly access the SPARSH portal for any reason.
- The two largest banks dealing with defence pensioners i.e. **State Bank of India (SBI) and Punjab National Bank (PNB)** have been co-opted as Service Centres.
- It will **interface all the stakeholders and provide a single source of truth** thereby ensuring transparency, accountability, and ease of doing business through information dissemination.

4.18 INDIA TO HOST THE FIRST INTERNET GOVERNANCE FORUM IN THE COUNTRY

Recently, the **National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI)**, Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) and the Chairman of Coordination Committee has launched the first **India Internet Governance Forum 2021 (IGF)**.

Genesis

- Internet governance was one of the most controversial issues during the first phase of the **World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS-I)**, held in Geneva in December 2003.
- It was recognised that understanding Internet governance was essential in **achieving the development goals of the Geneva Plan of Action**.
- The UN Secretary-General set up a **Working Group on Internet Governance (WGIG)** to explore these issues and prepare a report to feed into the **second phase of WSIS (WSIS-II), held in Tunis** in November 2005.
- WSIS-II requested the UN Secretary-General to convene an Internet Governance Forum, **as a multilateral, multi-stakeholder, democratic and transparent platform** for discussions on Internet governance issues.

Internet Governance Forum

- It is an **Internet Governance policy discussion platform** to bring representatives together from various groups, considering all at par to discuss public policy issues related to the Internet.
- It is referred to as the **multi-stakeholder model of Internet Governance**, which has been the key feature for the Internet's success.
- The theme of IGF-2021 is **Inclusive Internet for Digital India**.
- The multi-stakeholder concept is well adopted by IGF (**Internet Governance Forum**) under **United Nations** and by **Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)**.
- It was adopted by the **UN General Assembly** on 16 December 2015.

Significance of Internet Governance Forum in India

- India is the **second-largest broadband subscription country** in the world and also has the highest data consumption per user per month.
- It is the correct initiative for the country to ensure that the **growth of broadband adheres to the lifestyle and requirements** of the Indian community.
- IIGF 2021 is **adopting the multi-stakeholder concept** in organizing the event as per the true spirit of global IGF.
- It informs and inspires those with **policy-making power in both the public and private sectors**.

4.19 PM MODI ANNOUNCES MISSION TO MAKE INDIA SELF-SUFFICIENT IN EDIBLE OILS

Recently, the Prime Minister has announced a **National Edible Oil Mission-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)**.

National Edible Oil Mission-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)

- The government will invest more than **₹11,000 crore in the mission to provide farmers** everything possible, including better seeds and technology.
- The Centre plans to raise the domestic production of palm oil by **three times to 11 lakh MT by 2025-26**.
- It will involve raising the area under **oil palm cultivation to 10 lakh hectares by 2025-26 and 16.7 lakh hectares by 2029-30**.

- Under the scheme, **oil palm farmers will be provided financial assistance** and will get remuneration under a price and viability formula.

Need for National Edible Oil Mission-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)

- India produces **less than half of the roughly 2.4 crore tonnes of edible oil** that it consumes annually.
- It imports the rest, **buying palm oil from Indonesia and Malaysia, soyoil from Brazil and Argentina, and sunflower oil, mainly from Russia and Ukraine.**
- The country does **export agricultural commodities such as sugar and rice on the world market**, but domestic oilseed production is nearly six times lower than rice and wheat on average.
- India's vegetable oil imports have **surged to 1.5 crore tonnes from 40 lakh only** two decades ago.

Significance of National Edible Oil Mission-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)

- It aims to make **India self-sufficient in cooking oils, including palm oil and reducing the dependence on imports.**
- It will ensure that **farmers get all facilities, from quality seeds to technology to promote farming** to produce palm oil and other oil seeds.
- It's expected to incentivize production of palm oil to **reduce dependence on imports** and help farmers cash in on the huge market.
- The special emphasis of the scheme will be in **India's north-eastern states and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands** due to the conducive weather conditions in the regions.

4.20 HEALTH SYSTEMS HAVE HIGHEST NATIONAL AVERAGE OF 66.97 FOR THE ELDERLY: INDEX

Recently, the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister (EAC-PM) has released the **Quality of Life for Elderly Index**.

Quality of Life for Elderly Index

- It has been created by the **Institute for Competitiveness** at the request of EAC-PM.
- It identifies the **regional patterns of ageing across Indian States** and assesses the overall ageing situation in India.

- The Index framework includes four pillars: **Financial Well-being, Social Well-being, Health System and Income Security**.
 - The eight sub-pillars are **Economic Empowerment, Educational Attainment & Employment, Social Status, Physical Security, Basic Health, Psychological Wellbeing, Social Security and Enabling Environment**.
- It measures the **core domains of Economic, health, and social well-being of older people** and provides the in-depth situation of elderly people in India.

Significance of Quality of Life for Elderly Index

- It sheds light on an **issue often not mentioned- problems** faced by the elderly.
- It presents a **deeper insight into how well India is doing** to support the well-being of its ageing population.
- It goes **far beyond the adequacy of pensions and other forms of income support**, which, though critical, often narrows policy thinking and debate about the needs of this age group.
- It highlights that the **best way to improve the lives of the current and future generations of older people** is by investing in health, education and employment for young people today.

Key Findings of Quality of Life for Elderly Index

- The **Health System pillar** observes the **highest national average, 66.97 at an all-India level**, followed by **62.34 in Social Well-being**.
- **Financial Well-being observes a score of 44.7**, which is lowered by the low performance of 21 States across the Education Attainment & Employment pillar, which showcases scope for improvement.
- States have performed particularly **worse in the Income Security pillar** because over half of the States have a score below the national average, i.e. **33.03 in Income Security**, which is the lowest across all pillars.
- Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh are **top-scoring regions** in Aged and Relatively Aged States, respectively.
- Chandigarh and Mizoram are **top-scoring regions** in Union Territory and North-East States category.
- The **Aged States** refer to States with an **elderly population of more than 5 million**, whereas **Relatively Aged States** refer to States with an **Elderly population of less than 5 million**.
- Telangana and Gujarat are the **worst-performing states** in Aged and Relatively Aged States, respectively.

- Jammu & Kashmir and Arunachal Pradesh are the **worst-performing states** in Union Territory and North-East States category.

4.21 WHAT IS THE DELHI GOVERNMENT'S 'FACELESS' TRANSPORT INITIATIVE?

Recently, the **Delhi government** has launched ambitious programme called the '**Faceless**' **Transport Initiative**.

Need for Faceless Transport Initiative

- The RTO offices had over the years turned into dens of corruption as the **nexus of middlemen and officials** covered everything.
- It includes activities such as **issuance of learner's licenses to change of address in registration certificates (RC)**.

Faceless Transport Initiative?

- It has been introduced by **locking down** four Regional Transport Offices (RTO).
- It is a **one-stop destination for all transport department services** ranging from driving licences to transfer of ownership of vehicles.
- It seeks to **eliminate any scope of corruption** by ending the need for people to visit the RTOs.
- Under the scheme, **all the faceless applications will be processed within a period of seven days** which add that the motor licence officers will be responsible to look into the complaints on priority basis.
- All services **except permanent driving license and vehicle fitness** are now faceless, thereby meaning applicants don't have to visit transport authority offices.
- The services will include those related to **driving licence and registration certificates** such as duplicate copies, change in address, international driving permit and transfer of ownership.
- Delhi will become the **first state in the country to bring all transport-related services online**, thereby allowing people save time and money spent on visiting MLOs.
- The **e-learning licence (eLL)** could be obtained by an applicant by undertaking an online test at home or workplace by using Aadhaar authentication.

Working of Faceless Transport Initiative

- The guidelines developed by the Delhi government say that **Aadhaar-based verification** will be relied upon in dispensing the services online.
- A separate provision for those **not having or willing to share their Aadhaar details** has also been kept.
- An applicant, for example, for a learner's licence will have to **file an online application using an Aadhaar number** by visiting the portal.
- Upon entering the Aadhaar number, an **OTP will be sent to the Aadhaar-linked mobile number** of the applicant.
- The **verification of the documents will be done automatically** as the application developed by the government will draw details from the central Aadhaar database.
- There will be **separate provisions for making payments** and making digital signatures.

Services not offered under Faceless Transport Initiative

- The **two services** for which a person will have to visit the RTO are:
 - The **driving test** for getting a licence; and
 - The **vehicle fitness certificates**

4.22 - 69 WORKERS CONFERRED WITH PRIME MINISTER'S SHRAM AWARDS

Recently, the Government of India has announced the **Prime Minister's Shram Awards (PMSA)** for the year 2018.

Prime Minister's Shram Awards

- It was **instituted in the year 1985** under the Ministry of Labour & Employment.
- The Prime Minister's Shram Awards are given in three categories namely **Shram Bhushan Awards, ShramVir/ShramVeerangana Awards** and **Shram Shree/Shram Devi Awards**.
- It will be presented to the workmen as defined in the **Industrial Disputes Act, 1947**.
- The workmen **solely engaged in routine service duties** would not be eligible.
- It is awarded to workers employed in the **Departmental Undertakings & Public Sector Undertakings of the Central and State Governments** and **Private Sector Units employing 500 or more workers**.

- It is given for recognition of their **distinguished performance, innovative abilities, outstanding contribution in the field of productivity** and **exhibition of exceptional courage and presence of mind**.
- Its objective is to **recognize the outstanding contributions made by workmen** as defined in the Industrial Dispute Act, 1947 in organizations both in public and private sector.

Categories of Prime Minister's Shram Awards

- **Shram Bhushan Awards:** It is given to the workers who have made outstanding contributions in productivity and also shown innovative capabilities in high order.
 - It carries a cash award of **Rs. 100,000/-** and a **'Sanad'**.
- **ShramVir/ShramVeerangana Awards:** It is given to the workers who have a continuous record of dedicated service and has achieved high order of productivity.
 - It carries a cash award of **Rs. 60,000/-** and a **'Sanad'**.
- **Shram Shree/Shram Devi Awards:** It is given to the workers who have shown extraordinary zeal and enthusiasm for work.
 - It carries a cash award of **Rs. 40,000/-** and a **'Sanad'**.

Eligibility under Prime Minister's Shram Awards

- The nominated worker should be a **workmen as defined in Industrial Disputes Act, 1947**.
- He/She should have **worked continuously atleast for the past 10 years** in the nominating establishment.
- He/She should have **distinguished record of performance** in the industry or company.
- He/She should have **regularity and punctuality in attendance**.

4.23 PM MODI SENDS CENTURION BABASAHEB PURANDARE A VIDEO GREETING

Recently, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi has wished **Babasaheb Purandare** on his 100th birthday, praying for a healthy life ahead.

Babasaheb Purandare

- He is also known as **Balwant Moreshwar Purandare**.
- He is popularly known as **Shiv-Shahir (Shivaji's bard)**.

- He was born on **July 29, 1922** at Saswad near Poona (now Pune).
- He is an **eminent historian, author and theatre personality**.
- His works are mostly based on the events related to the life of **Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj**, the 17th-century Maratha warrior, who laid the foundation of **HindaviSwarajya**.
- He is mostly known for his popular play on **Shivaji Maharaj - 'Jaanata Raja'** - which was popular not only in Maharashtra but also in other states.
- He was conferred the "**Maharashtra Bhushan**" in 2015 and the country's second highest civilian honour, "Padma Vibhushan" in 2019.
- Among Purandare's prominent works is the monumental two-volume **RajeShivchhatrapati and Jaanta Raja, Maharaj, Shelarkhind, GadkotKille, Agra, Lal Mahal, Purandar, Rajgad, Panhalgad, Sinhagad, Pratapgad, Purandaryanchi Daulat, MujaryacheMankari, Fulwanti, Savitri and KalawantinichaSajja**.

4.24 OPERATION BLUE FREEDOM - LARGEST TEAM OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES TO REACH THE WORLD'S HIGHEST BATTLEFIELD IN SIACHEN

Recently, the Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment has flagged off '**Operation Blue Freedom**'.

Operation Blue Freedom

- Under this operation, **people with disabilities** from across the country will **undertake an expedition till Siachen Glacier**.
- The Operation aims to **create a new World Record for the largest team of people with disabilities** to reach the world's highest battlefield.
- The selected people with disabilities from across the country will **undertake an expedition till Kumar Post (Siachen Glacier)** to create a new World Record for the largest team of people with disabilities to reach the world's highest battlefield.
- The team of people with disabilities has been **trained by 'Team CLAW'** which is a team of Armed Forces veterans.
- It shall subsequently undergo **three stages of acclimatisation, training and medical screening** before being inducted into the Siachen Base Camp for the final expedition.

- Those selected will undergo all the three stages of **acclimatisation and training at Leh (Stage 1), Siachen base camp (Stage 2) and North Pullu (Stage 3)** after which the final expedition team would be selected.



Significance of Operation Blue Freedom

- It shall firmly place India on the **global stage as a leader in empowering Divyangjan** and set a benchmark for other nations to emulate.
- It will drive the Prime Minister’s vision for Divyangjan and MSJE’s pursuit to **harness the immense productive potential of people with disabilities**.
- It will powerfully **portray the skill and heart of India’s Armed Forces** not only on the Battlefield but off it as well.

CLAW

- CLAW Global was set up in January 2019 by **Major Vivek Jacob**, a retired Para Special Forces officer.
- It was established with an **aim of teaching life skills to adventurers** and people with disabilities.
- It is an **India-based organization** helping people with **disabilities** follow their passions in adventurous activities.

- The organization, which stands for **Conquer Land Air Water**, has worked with people with disabilities across India to help them partake in activities like scuba diving etc.

4.25 DR. VIRENDRA KUMAR LAUNCHES TAPAS

Recently, the Union Minister for Social Justice & Empowerment has launched an online portal **TAPAS (Training for Augmenting Productivity and Services)**.

TAPAS Initiative

- TAPAS is the initiative of **National Institute of Social Defence (NISD)**.
- TAPAS is a **standard MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) platform** with course material such as filmed lectures and e-study material.
- It also includes **discussion forums to support and encourage interactions** among students and course coordinators.
- The five basic courses are on **Drug (Substance) Abuse Prevention, Geriatric/Elderly Care, Care and Management of Dementia, Transgender Issues** and on comprehensive course on Social Defence Issues.

Significance of TAPAS Initiative

- Its primary objective is to **impart training and enhance the knowledge and skills** for the capacity building of the participants.
- It seeks to **provide access to lectures by subject experts, study material** and more, but in a manner that it supplements the physical classroom without compromising on the quality of teaching.

TAPAS Portal

- The TAPAS portal is **developed by** the National Institute of Social Defence, Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- The idea of TAPAS was **conceptualized at a time when exploring the online medium for work and education had become imperative** due to the outbreak of Covid 19 pandemic.

4.26 FIT INDIA FREEDOM RUN 2.0 TO CELEBRATE 75 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

Recently, Union Minister of Youth Affairs & Sports Shri Anurag Singh Thakur has launched **Fit India Freedom Run 2.0**.

Fit India Freedom Run 2.0

- It is the **nationwide programme** as part of **Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav** which celebrates 75 years on India's Independence.
- It will be organized in nearly **750 Districts, 75 villages in each of the Districts** across the country.
 - It was **launched at 75 other locations across the country**, including Delhi's Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium, the Cellular Jail in Port Blair, Kaza Post in LahaulSpiti, Mumbai's Gateway of India and the Attari Border in Punjab among many others.
- The Freedom Run event will also **connect the country with their national heroes** who got India its freedom.
- It aims to promote the **Fitness ki Doze, AadhaGhunta Roz** campaign.
- The key activities of Fit India Freedom Run 2.0 include **pledge, rendering of National Anthem, Freedom Run, cultural functions** at venues and **awareness among Youth Volunteers** to participate.
- The Fit India Freedom Run 2.0 aims at "**Jan Bhagidari se Jan Aandolan**".

Fit India Movement

- It was launched on 29th August, 2019 by the Prime Minister with a view to **make fitness an integral part** of our daily lives.
- Its mission is to **bring about behavioural changes** and move towards a more physically active lifestyle.
- It proposes to **undertake various initiatives and conduct events** to achieve the following objectives:
 - To promote **fitness as easy, fun and free**
 - To spread **awareness on fitness and various physical activities** that promotes fitness through focused campaigns
 - To encourage **indigenous sports**
 - To make **fitness reach every school, college/university, Panchayat/village**, etc.
 - To create a **platform for citizens of India to share information, drive awareness and encourage sharing** of personal fitness stories

4.27 PARTITION HORRORS REMEMBRANCE DAY

Recently, the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has said that in memory of the struggles and sacrifices of our people, **14th August** will be observed as **Partition Horrors Remembrance Day**.

Partition Horrors Remembrance Day

- It was declared that August 14 would now be observed as “Partition Horrors Remembrance Day” to **commemorate the “struggles and sacrifices” of millions who were displaced and who lost their lives** during Partition.
- It aims to keep reminding us of the **need to remove the poison of social divisions, disharmony and further strengthen the spirit of oneness, social harmony and human empowerment**.
- The official **drew a parallel with how other countries mark dark chapters of their history** such as Holocaust, Slave Trade, and Bangladesh’s March 25 as Genocide Day to mark the brutal Pak crackdown.
- It holds significance in the **backdrop of the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan** and the steady advance of the Taliban raising old spectres in the region.

Events leading to Partition in India

Mountbatten Plan, Dickie Bird Plan or Balkan Plan (June 3, 1947)

- In February, 1947, **Lord Mountbatten was sent as the Viceroy to India** to ensure early transfer of power. He put up his plan on June 3, 1947 which included partition of India.
- Following the **Mountbatten Plan, June 3, 1947**, India was made free, but by partitioning India the new state of Pakistan was created.
- The major points of the plan were as follows:
 - **Dominion Status**
 - The 3rd June, 1947 Plan, famously came to be known as the Mountbatten Plan.
 - It sought to affect an early transfer of power.
 - This transfer of power was to be done on the basis of Dominion Status to two successor states, India and Pakistan.
 - **Partition**

- The members of the Legislative Assemblies of Bengal and the Punjab should meet separately in two groups i.e. representatives of the predominantly Hindu areas, and representatives of the predominantly Muslim areas.
- If both sections of each of these Assemblies voted for partition, then that province would be partitioned.
- Partition will be followed by creation of two dominions and two constituent assemblies.
- If Bengal decided in favour of partition, a referendum was to be held in the Sylhet District of Assam to decide its fate.
- Similarly, a referendum was proposed to decide the future of the North West Frontier Province.
- Sindh Legislative Assembly was to decide either to join the existing Constituent Assembly or the New Constituent Assembly.
- **Boundary Commission**
 - In case of partition, the viceroy would set up a Boundary Commission to demarcate the boundaries of the province on the basis of ascertaining the contiguous majority areas of Muslims and non-Muslims.
 - Thus, a boundary commission was set up under the chairmanship of Sir Cyril Redcliff for demarcating the boundaries of new parts of the Punjab and Bengal.
- **Princely States**
 - The British suzerainty over these Princely states was terminated.
 - They were given the choice to remain independent or accede to dominions of India or Pakistan.
- **Transfer of Power**
 - Mountbatten announced at a press conference that the British would soon leave India for good on 15 August 1947.
 - Thus, an early date was decided by the British to leave India as compared to 30th June 1948 as decided earlier.
 - Thus, the League's demand for creation of Pakistan was conceded to the extent that it would be created, but taking Congress' position on unity into account Pakistan would be made as small as possible. Mountbatten's formula was to divide India but retain maximum unity.
- **Rationale for an early date**

- One of the major reasons for an early date for withdrawal was the desperation of the British to secure Congress's agreement on dominion status.
- The British also wanted to escape responsibility for the rapidly deteriorating communal situation.
- Mountbatten's formula was to **divide India and at the same time retain maximum possible unity**.
 - The actual division between the **two new dominions of India and Pakistan** was accomplished according to what has come to be known as the 3rd June Plan or Mountbatten Plan
 - It was announced at a press conference by Mountbatten on 4 June 1947, and the **date of independence was also announced – 15 August 1947**.
- **Congress accepted the dominion status** provided under this Plan for various reasons:
 - To ensure a peaceful and quick transfer of power
 - It was more important for the Congress to assume authority to check the explosive situation
 - It would allow for some much-needed continuity in the bureaucracy and the army

Salient Features of India Independence Act 1947

- It provided for **two dominion states: India and Pakistan**
- The boundaries between the two dominion states were to be **determined by a Boundary Commission** which was headed by **Sir Cyril Radcliff**.
- It provided for **partition of Punjab & Bengal and separate boundary commissions** to demarcate the boundaries between them.
- Pakistan was to comprise the **West Punjab, East Bengal, Territories of the Sind, North West frontier provinces, Sylhat divisions of Assam, Bhawalpur, khairpur, Baluchistan and 8 other princely states of Baluchistan**.
- The **authority of the British Crown over the princely states ceased** and they were free to join either India or Pakistan or remain independent.
- Both the dominions of India and Pakistan were to have **Governor Generals to be appointed by the British King**.
- The **constituent assemblies of both the states were free** to make constitutions of their respective countries.
- Any **modification or omission** could be done by the Governor General.
- British Government would **not continue any control** on any dominion.

- The **Governor General was invested with adequate powers until March 1948** to issue orders for effective implementation of the provisions of the Indian independence act 1947.
- Those **civil servants who had been appointed before the August 15, 1947**, will continue in service with same privileges.

4.28 INDIA'S FLAG CODE, AND THE RULES GOVERNING DISPLAY OF TRICOLOUR

Recently, India celebrated its **75th Independence Day** after the Prime Minister hoisted the national flag at Red Fort.

History of Indian National Flag

- The first national flag, which consisted of **three horizontal stripes of red, yellow and green**, is said to have been hoisted on August 7, 1906, at the Parsee Bagan Square in Calcutta (Kolkata).
- In 1921, freedom fighter **PingaliVenkayya met Mahatma Gandhi** and proposed a basic design of the flag, consisting of two red and green bands.
- The Tricolour was **adopted as our national flag** at a Congress Committee meeting in **Karachi in 1931**.
- The Indian flag was adopted in its present form during a meeting of the Constituent Assembly held on July 22, 1947.

Early rules governing the display of the Tricolour

- The earliest rules for the display of the national flag were **originally governed by the provisions of:**
 - The Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950 and
 - The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971
- It **prohibits the desecration of or insult to the country's national symbols**, including the national flag, the Constitution, the national anthem and the Indian map.
- It says that whoever in any public place or in public view **burns, mutilates, defaces, defiles, disfigures, destroys, tramples upon or into contempt the Indian National Flag or the Constitution of India** or any part thereof, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to three years, or with fine, or with both.

- It says that putting any kind of inscription upon the flag, using it to cover a statue, a monument or platform, and embroidering or printing it on cushions, handkerchiefs, napkins or any dress material is also considered disrespect to the Tricolour.
- In 2002, the Flag Code of India came into effect which **allowed the unrestricted display of the Tricolour** as long as the honour and dignity of the flag were being respected.

Restrictions on the display of the Tricolour under Flag Code of India

- The **Flag Code of 2002** is divided into three parts:
 - A general description of the tricolour;
 - Rules on display of the flag by public and private bodies and educational institutions; and
 - Rules for display of the flag by governments and government bodies
- It states that there will be **no restriction on the display of the flag by public and private bodies and educational institutions** except to the extent as laid down in the Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950 and the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.
- It mentions that the **tricolour cannot be used for commercial purposes**, and cannot be dipped in salute to any person or thing.
- It further states that whenever the flag is displayed, it should be **distinctly placed and should “occupy the position of honour”**.
- The things which are **not allowed**:
 - Putting up a damaged or dishevelled flag;
 - Flying the tricolour from a single masthead simultaneously with other flags; and
 - No other object, including flowers or garlands, or flag should be placed on the same height beside the tricolour or above it
- The flag should **not be used as a festoon**, or for any kind of decoration purposes.

Standard dimensions of the Indian flag

- The flag code states that the tricolour can be of nine standard dimensions i.e. **6300 x 4200, 3600 x 2400, 2700 x 1800, 1800 x 1200, 1350 x 900, 900 x 600, 450 x 300, 225 x 150 and 150 x 100 (all sizes in mm)**.
- It further adds that flags of 450 x 300 mm size should be used on VVIP flights, 225 x 150 mm on cars and all table flags should be 150 x 100 mm in size.
- The tricolor should be **rectangular in shape** and the **length-to-width ratio should always be 3:2**.

- The national flag should **always be made of hand-spun and hand-woven wool or cotton or silk khadi bunting.**

Rules for display of Indian Flag

- The flag code mandates that the **tricolour should always be distinctly placed** and should “occupy the position of honour”.
- The flag should always be **hoisted briskly and lowered slowly and ceremoniously.**
- When a flag is displayed from a staff projecting horizontally from a **window sill, balcony or front of a building, the saffron band** should be at the farther end of the staff.
- When displayed on a speaker’s platform, the **flag should be placed on the speaker’s right** as s/he **faces the audience** or flat against the wall above and behind the speaker.
- When displayed on a car, the **flag should be flown from a staff fixed** either in the middle of the bonnet or the front right of the car.
- When carried in a parade, the **flag should either be in the front of the centre of the line or towards** the right of the file that is marching forward.
- The flag code further states that when the Tricolour is passing by in a parade, or during a ceremony of **hoisting or lowering of the flag, the persons present should stand at attention and salute the flag.**

4.29 ABOLITION OF TRIBUNALS IN INDIA

Recently, the Supreme Court has expressed its **discontentment over the functioning of tribunals** in the country, given that several of these important quasi-judicial bodies are understaffed.

- In a hearing, a Bench led by Chief Justice of India N V Ramana asked the government if it **intends to shut down tribunals** that have several key vacant posts.

Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2021

- It **replaces a similar Ordinance** promulgated in April 2021 that sought to:
 - **Dissolve eight tribunals** that functioned as appellate bodies to hear disputes under various statutes; and
 - **Transfer their functions to existing judicial forums** such as a civil court or a High Court.

- The Bill states that the **Chairpersons and Members of the tribunal being abolished** shall cease to hold office.
- They will be **entitled to claim compensation equivalent to three months' pay and allowances** for their premature termination.
- It proposes **changes in the process of appointment** of certain other tribunals.

Changes brought by Tribunals Reforms Bill, 2021

- It provides for **uniform pay and rules for the search and selection committees** across tribunals.
- It provides for **removal of tribunal members**.
- It states that the central government shall, on the recommendation of the **Search-cum-Selection Committee**, remove from office any Chairperson or a Member, who:
 - Has been **adjudged as an insolvent**; or
 - Has been **convicted of an offence which involves moral turpitude**; or
 - Has become **physically or mentally incapable of acting** as such Chairperson or Member; or
 - Has acquired such **financial or other interest as is likely to affect prejudicially his functions** as such Chairperson or Member; or
 - Has so **abused his position** as to render his continuance in office prejudicial to the public interest
- The chairpersons and judicial members of tribunals are **former judges of High Courts and the Supreme Court**.
- It brings greater **accountability on the functioning of the tribunals** and raises questions on the independence of these judicial bodies.
- It brings in the **Chief Secretary of the state** and the **Chairman of the Public Service Commission of the concerned state** who will have a vote and Secretary or Principal Secretary of the state's General Administrative Department with no voting right.
- It provides for a **four-year term of office** (subject to the upper age limit of 70 years for the Chairperson, and 67 years for members).
 - It specifies a **minimum age requirement of 50 years** for appointment of a chairperson or a member.

Implications of cases in dissolved tribunals

- These cases will be **transferred to High Courts or commercial civil courts** immediately.

- There are some experts who believe that the **cases might get a faster hearing and disposal** if taken to High Courts.
- There are other experts who fear that the **lack of specialisation in regular courts** could be detrimental to the decision-making process.

Constitutional validity of tribunals in India

- The original Constitution **did not contain provisions** with respect to tribunals but the **42nd Amendment Act of 1976** added a new **Part XIV-A to the Constitution**.
- **Article 323 A** empowers the Parliament to provide for the **establishment of administrative tribunals for the adjudication of disputes** relating to recruitment and conditions of service of persons appointed to public services.
 - It enables the **Parliament to take out the adjudication of disputes** relating to service matters from the civil courts and the high courts and place it before the administrative tribunals.
- The Parliament has passed the **Administrative Tribunals Act in 1985** which authorizes the Central government to establish one Central administrative tribunal and the state administrative tribunals.
- The Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) exercises **original jurisdiction in relation to recruitment and all service matters** of public servants covered by it.
 - Its jurisdiction extends to the **all-India services, the Central civil services, civil posts under the Centre and civilian employees of defence services**.
 - The members of the **defence forces, officers and servants of the Supreme Court** and the secretarial staff of the Parliament are not covered by it.
- Under **Article 323 B**, the Parliament and the state legislatures are **authorised to provide for the establishment of tribunals** for the adjudication of disputes relating to the following matters:
 - Taxation, Foreign exchange, import and export, Industrial and labour, Land reforms, Ceiling on urban property, Elections to Parliament and state legislatures, Food stuffs and Rent and tenancy rights
- **Article 136 of the constitution** empowers the Supreme Court to grant special leave to appeal from any judgment, decree, order, determination, sentence or order passed or made by any tribunal in India.
- **Article 227 enables every High Court to exercise power of superintendence over all tribunals** throughout the territories over which it exercises jurisdiction.

4.30 GATI SHAKTI MASTER PLAN THAT PM MODI ANNOUNCED ON INDEPENDENCE DAY

Recently, the Prime Minister has launched the **PM Gati Shakti Master Plan** on the 75th Independence Day.

Need for PM Gati Shakti Master Plan

- India has been working for a reset of its **logistics sector involving railways, highways, inland waterways and airports** to put in place an effective transportation grid.
- The logistics make up about **13% of costs for Indian companies, making exports uncompetitive** vis-a-vis China.
- India needs to **increase both manufacturing and exports** because every product that is sold globally from India is attached to India.

PM Gati Shakti Master Plan?

- It is a **Rs. 100 lakh-crore project** for developing '**holistic infrastructure**'.
- It is a **national infrastructure master plan** which will make a foundation for holistic infrastructure.
- It will help **raise the global profile of local manufacturers** and help them compete with their counterparts worldwide.
- It raises possibilities of **new future economic zones**.

Significance of PM Gati Shakti Master Plan

- It is aimed at **easier interconnectivity between road, rail, air and waterways** to reduce travel time and improve industrial productivity.
- It is aimed at **breaking silos within the transport network** to reduce travel time and improve industrial productivity.
- It aims at **improving industrial productivity, making manufacturing globally competitive, facilitating future economic zones** and creating employment.

4.31 'STUDENT ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM' (SEP 3.0): FOSTERING YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS WITH INNOVATIVE SKILLS

Recently, the **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** of NITI Aayog has launched the third series of **Student Entrepreneurship Program (SEP)**.

Student Entrepreneurship Program (SEP)?

- It is joint programme of **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** and **La Fondation Dassault Systems** in India.
- The theme of SEP 3.0 is based on the '**Made in 3D - Seed the Future Entrepreneurs Program**'.
- It is conceptualized and rolled out in France by **La Main à la Pate Foundation** and **La Fondation Dassault Systèmes Europe** in 2017.
- As part of this program, **a team from each school** (6 students and a teacher) will be allocated seed funding towards:
 - Creating their own start-up;
 - Design and prototype their innovation using 3D printing;
 - Prepare marketing campaign;
 - Define product pricing; and
 - Create expansion strategy
- It **consists of 14 courses** that enable the participants to:
 - Understand India's entrepreneurial ecosystem;
 - Introduces the basic functional areas of management;
 - Familiarizes the nuances of creativity and innovation;
 - Explains the process of executing a business idea into a successful business model;
 - Acquaints them with the regulatory frameworks; and
 - The scaling up challenges faced by an entrepreneur

Features of SEP 3.0

- A total of **50 teams from 26 states** are selected for the SEP 3.0.
- **Top 20 teams of ATL Marathon 2019, 10 teams selected by Dassault, 10 teams from Aspirational Districts and 10 teams from Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh and North east regions** are selected.

Significance of Student Entrepreneurship Program (SEP)

- It will allow **student innovators to work closely with Dassault volunteers** and gain:

- Mentor support, Prototyping and testing support, End-User feedback, Intellectual Property registration and Patenting of ideas/processes/products, Manufacturing support, and launch of the product in the market.
- It will be **interaction opportunities for students and teachers**, between French and Indian schools.
- The school students and teachers will have a **unique opportunity to interact and collaborate with French schools and French students** for cultural and technical interactions.
- It seeks to **provide opportunity to school children to develop an entrepreneurial and inventive mind set**, as well as suitable exposure through activities-based learning, exploration and challenges.
- The school students and teachers will have a **unique opportunity to connect and interact with French schools and students for cultural and technical knowledge sharing**.

4.32 WHY BANKS WANT INSPECTION REPORTS BY RBI TO BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL

Recently, the contentious issue of **whether banks should disclose inspection reports** by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is back in the reckoning once again.

- It came into limelight after a division bench of the **Supreme Court referred writ petitions** filed by banks to a bench led by Justice L Nageswara Rao.

Genesis

- The legal battle for the **disclosure of inspection reports and defaulters list started when RTI activist Jayantilal Mistry** sought information under RTI Act, 2005 from the RBI.
- The matter went up to the Supreme Court as **Mistry's appeals were not entertained** by several layers of the RTI process.

Issue around Confidentiality of Inspection Report by RBI

- In 2015, the Supreme Court had come down on the RBI for **trying to keep the inspection reports and defaulters list confidential**.
- The SC had said the **RBI has no legal duty to maximize the benefit of any public sector or private sector bank**, and thus there is no relationship of 'trust' between them.
- It added that the **RBI was duty-bound to uphold the public interest** by revealing these details under RTI.
- The central bank then **allowed making such reports public** following the Supreme Court order.

- The SC had wanted full disclosure of the inspection report but the **court agreed that only some portions on bad loans and borrowers** would be made public.

Arguments given by Banks on Confidentiality of Inspection Reports

- The banks fear that any adverse remarks, especially from the regulator RBI, will **affect their performance and keep customers away**.
- Banks led by SBI argued that **banks are driven by the “trust and faith”** of their clients that should not be made public.
- The private banks insisted that the **RTI Act does not apply to private banks**.
- The banks also argued that **privacy is a fundamental right**, and therefore should not be violated by making clients' information public.

Reasons for banks going against disclosing inspection reports

- Many feel that the RBI's inspection reports on various banks, with details on **alleged malpractices and mismanagement**, can open up a can of worms.
- The banks want to keep them under wraps as these reports have **details about how the banks were manipulated by rogue borrowers and officials**.
- The banks **do not want inspection reports and defaulters' lists** to be made public as it affects their image.

Road Ahead

- The **transparency and maximum disclosure** are the immutable cornerstones of an effective democracy.
 - The **absolute and uncontrolled information flow may sometimes be antithetical** to the objective this proposition seeks to achieve.
- The legislation requires **judicial intervention to balance the conflict** between the expectation of the information seeker and the right of the information owner.

4.33 RAJNATH LAUNCHES DEFENCE INDIA STARTUP CHALLENGE 5.0

Recently, the Ministry of Defence has launched the **Defence India Startup Challenge (DISC) 5.0**.

Highlights

- It is launched with **35 Problem Statements (PS) from Armed Forces and OFB/DPSUs** for resolution by startups & innovators.
- The **winners receive grants up to Rs 1.5 crore from iDEX**, along with support from Partner Incubators and guidance from the Nodal Officers who are the ultimate users.
- The launch of DISC 5.0 will be a **massive leap towards leveraging the startup ecosystem** to develop India's defence technologies, equipment design and manufacturing capabilities.
- It will encourage startups to **become more attuned to innovative concepts and inculcate the approach of creative thinking** in India's budding entrepreneurs.

Defence India Startup Challenge?

- It was launched by the **Innovations for Defence Excellence (iDEX), Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO)** in 2018.
- It has been launched by **Ministry of Defence** in partnership with **Atal Innovation Mission**.
- It is aimed at **supporting Startups/MSMEs/Innovators to create prototypes** and/or commercialize products/solutions in the area of National Defence and Security.

Significance of Defence India Startup Challenge

- It will help in **creating functional prototypes of products/technologies** relevant for national security (prototyping), and spur fast-moving innovation in the India defence sector.
- It will help **new tech products/technologies find a market and early customer (commercialization)** in the form of the Indian Defence Establishment.

Eligibility to participate in Defence India Startup Challenge

- Start-ups, as defined and recognized by **Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion (DIPP)**, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India.
- Any Indian company **incorporated under the Companies Act 1956/2013**, primarily a Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) as defined in the MSME Act, 2006.
- **Individual innovators** are also encouraged to apply (research & academic institutions can use this category to apply).

Role of iDEX in Defence India Startup Challenge

- The iDEX provides a **platform for different stakeholders in the defence & aerospace sectors** to oversee technology development and potential collaborations in the specific field.
- The iDEX is able to **utilise the strong science, technology and research talent base** of the country to develop new capabilities in defence innovation.
- The iDEX had been **designed to infuse latest technology into military warfare** closely intertwined with the needs of the Services and reduce dependence on imports.

4.34 AN ANCIENT DRAVIDIAN LANGUAGE LINK WITH THE INDUS VALLEY CIVILISATION

Recently, the new research paper published in the peer-reviewed journal of the Springer Nature Group has provided some interesting **new insight on the linguistic culture of the Harappans**.

Key Findings of the Research Paper

- The paper traced their **language roots to proto-Dravidian** by taking clues from a few words shared between the Indus Valley people and the cultures they came in contact with.
- The paper suggested that **speakers of ancestral Dravidian languages** had a greater historic presence in northern India including the Indus Valley region from where they migrated.
- It took into account the thriving trade relations between the **Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC) and the Persian Gulf** as well as Mesopotamia.
- The researchers have searched through the **near-Eastern texts to locate foreign words** with roots in the Indus Valley.
- The study found that the **Akkadian (language spoken in ancient Mesopotamia) word for elephant- 'pīru'/'pīri'** and their variations, as well as the old Persian word for ivory, 'pīrus' possibly had roots in the Indus Valley.
- The ivory-words (e.g., 'ab', 'abu', 'āb', 'beḥu', 'netcheḥ-t') used in **ancient Egypt** (the only other major source of prehistoric ivory), has **no phonetic connection to 'pīru'**.
- The **Near Eastern ivory-objects of middle-third to early-second millennium BC** with Asian elephants and IVC traders have no phonetic connection to 'pīru'.
- The report has written that these **'pīru'-based words could likely have originated** in Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC).

- The paper suggested that in several **Dravidian languages**, ‘pīlu’, ‘pella’, ‘palla’, ‘pallava’, ‘pīlūvam’, ‘pīluru’ are used to signify elephant.
- It pointed out to the discrepancy between the **use of ‘l’ in the Indic languages** and ‘r’ in **Akkadian and old Persian**.
- It also suggested that since **people of ancient Persia had functioned as intermediaries between Mesopotamia and IVC traders** while exporting IVC’s ivory, they had arguably spread the Indic elephant word (‘piru’ ‘pīlu’) to Mesopotamia as well.
- The paper explained that they are connected with the root words for tooth in the Dravidian languages- ‘pal’, ‘pella’, ‘pallu’, ‘palu’, which are unmistakably related to the words that mean elephant or elephant tusk, that is, ‘pīlu’, ‘pīlakā’, ‘palla’, ‘pella’.
- The paper suggested that the relation between **Proto-Dravidian tooth-word and the Dravidian ‘pal’/‘pīl’-based elephant-words** must be deeply etymological, not accidental.
- The research paper wrote that **Indian epic Mahābhārata (Ganguli, 1883–96)** frequently associates the ‘pīlu’ tree with regions of Indus river basin.
- The paper concluded that the **basic vocabulary items of a significant population of the Indus Valley Civilisation** must have been proto-Dravidian, or that ancestral Dravidian languages must have been spoken in the Indus Valley region.

Understanding IVC through Research Paper

- In 2010, Ashok Parpola **mapped the symbols used in the Indus Valley script** and connected them to words used in modern Dravidian languages.
- In 2019, a study made a case for the **spread of proto-Dravidian languages from the areas of northwestern India to southern India**.
- The formation of **human population in South and Central Asia** suggested that after the decline of the Indus Valley Civilisation, groups from north and north western India speaking a **proto-Dravidian language moved south and east**.
- The possible scenario combining genetic data with archaeology and linguistics is that **proto-Dravidian was spread by people of the IVC** along with the Indus Periphery Cline ancestry component of the ASI.
- The **non-genetic support for an IVC origin of Dravidian languages includes the present-day geographic distribution** of these languages and a suggestion that some symbols on ancient Indus Valley seals denote Dravidian words or names.



Languages in the Indus Valley Civilisation

- The regions speak **Indo-Aryan languages** that includes:
 - **Punjabi** in Punjab with dialects Siraiki and Lahnda;
 - **Sindhi** in Sindh, Hindi, Marwari, Gujarati in eastern parts of Greater Indus Valley;
 - **Dardic** including Shina, Khowar, Kohistani;
 - **Iranian** that has Baluchi, Dari, Pashto, and Wakhi in western parts of Greater Indus Valley;
 - **Nuristani** in northeastern Afghanistan;
 - **Brahui** spoken in Baluchistan and Sindh; and
 - **Burushaski**, a language spoken in northernmost Pakistan close to the Chinese border

4.35 COLLEGIUM SYSTEM IN INDIA

Recently, the Supreme Court collegium has **cleared nine names for appointments in the top court**, including the name of justice **BV Nagarathna** from the Karnataka high court (HC), who, if elevated now, could become the **country's first woman CJI in 2027**.

Constitution on Appointment of Judges

- **Article 124(2)**: This article of the Indian Constitution reads that the Judges of the Supreme Court are appointed by the President after consultation with such a number of the Judges of the Supreme Court and of the High Courts in the States as the President may deem necessary for the purpose.
- **Article 217**: Indian Constitution's article states that the Judge of a High Court shall be appointed by the President consultation with the Chief Justice of India, the Governor of the State, and, in the case of appointment of a Judge other than the Chief Justice, the Chief Justice of the High Court.

Collegium System in India?

- It is a system under which **appointments and elevations of judges and lawyers** to the Supreme Court and the High Courts.
- The transfer of judges to **High Courts and the Apex court are decided by a forum of the Chief Justice of India** and 4 senior most judges of the Supreme Court.

Genesis of Collegium System in India

The First Judge Case - S.P. Gupta v/s Union Of India

- The President had relied on the **advice of the Chief Justice of the Delhi high court than the advice of the CJI** and did not extend the term of an additional judge in the Delhi High Court.
- In this case, it was announced that the **primacy of the Chief Justice of India (CJI) recommendation** on judicial appointments and transfers can be refused on logical reason basis.

The Second Judge Case - Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v/s Union of India

- The Supreme Court introduced a collegiums system and it said that **consultation meant concurrence** in appointments.

- After this, the CJIs individual opinion was not taken but an **institutional opinion was formed after consulting two more senior-most judges** of the Supreme Court.

Third Judge Case - Re Presidential Reference

- After the President suggested, the Supreme Court **expanded the collegium to a five-member body** rather than 3.
 - It included the **Chief Justice of India along with 4 senior-most judges**.
- The High Court collegiums are led by the **Chief Justice there along with four other senior-most judges** of the court.

Argument against Collegium System in India

- The administrative burden of **appointing and transferring judges without a separate secretariat** or intelligence-gathering mechanism dedicated to collection of and checking personal and professional backgrounds of prospective appointees;
- **A closed-door affair** without a formal and transparent system;
- The limitation of the **collegium's field of choice to the senior-most judges** from the High Court for appointments to the Supreme Court, overlooking several talented junior judges and advocates

4.36 PM ANNOUNCES RICE FORTIFICATION PLAN TO TACKLE MALNUTRITION

Recently, the Prime Minister has announced the **fortification of rice distributed under various government schemes**, including the public distribution system (PDS) and midday meals in schools, by 2024.

Fortification of Rice?

- The FSSAI defines fortification as **deliberately increasing the content of essential micronutrients in a food** so as to improve the nutritional quality of food and to provide public health benefit with minimal risk to health.
- The rice fortification is a **process of adding micronutrients** to regular rice.
 - The **micronutrients are added** keeping in mind dietary requirements.
- The 'extrusion' is considered to be the **best technology for rice fortification in India** which involves the production of fortified rice kernels (FRKs) from a mixture using an extruder machine.

- The **fortified rice kernels are then blended with regular rice** to produce fortified rice.

Extrusion Technology to produce FRK?

- In extrusion technology, **dry rice flour is mixed with a premix of micronutrients**, and water is added to this mixture.
- The mixture then goes into a **twin-screw extruder with heating zones**, which produces kernels similar in shape and size to rice.
- These kernels are **dried, cooled and packaged for use and the FRK** has a shelf life of at least 12 months.
- The shape and size of the fortified rice kernel should **resemble the normal milled rice as closely as possible** as per guidelines issued by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
 - According to the guidelines, the **length and breadth of the grain** should be 5 mm and 2.2 mm respectively.

Need for Rice Fortification

- India has very **high levels of malnutrition** among women and children.
- According to the Food Ministry, **every second woman** in the country is **anaemic** and every third child is stunted.
- **India ranks 94 out of 107 countries on the Global Hunger Index (GHI)**, which puts it in the 'serious hunger' category.
- Fortification of food is considered to be one of the most suitable methods to **combat malnutrition**.
- Rice is one of India's staple foods, **consumed by about two-thirds of the population** and per capita rice consumption in India is 6.8 kg per month.

What are the standards for fortification?

- Under the Ministry's guidelines, **10 g of FRK must be blended with 1 kg of regular rice**.
- According to FSSAI norms, **1 kg of fortified rice** will contain the following:
 - **Iron** (28 mg-42.5 mg), **folic acid** (75-125 microgram), and **vitamin B-12** (0.75-1.25 microgram); and

- Rice may also be fortified with **zinc** (10 mg-15 mg), **vitamin A** (500-750 microgram RE), **vitamin B-1** (1 mg-1.5 mg), **vitamin B-2** (1.25 mg-1.75 mg), **vitamin B-3** (12.5 mg-20 mg) and **vitamin B-6** (1.5 mg-2.5 mg) per kg

Fortification in India

- Rice is the **fifth food item that the government is promoting** with fortification with **salt, edible oil, milk and wheat** being the others.
- Food Fortification is a **scientifically proven, cost-effective, scalable and sustainable global intervention** that addresses the issue of micronutrient deficiencies.
- In October 2016, FSSAI operationalized the Food Safety and Standards (Fortification of Foods) Regulations, 2016 for fortifying staples namely:
 - **Wheat Flour and Rice** (with Iron, Vitamin B12 and Folic Acid)
 - **Milk and Edible Oil** (with Vitamins A and D)
 - **Double Fortified Salt** (with Iodine and Iron)
- The World Health Organization also recommends **fortification of rice with iron, vitamins and folic acid as a public health strategy** to improve the iron levels of populations.

4.37 INVESTIGATING OFFICER IS NOT REQUIRED TO ARREST EACH AND EVERY ACCUSED AT THE TIME OF FILING CHARGE-SHEET: SUPREME COURT

The Supreme Court has ruled that **Section 170 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC)** does **not impose an obligation on the Officer-in-charge to arrest** each and every accused at the time of filing of the chargesheet.

- The Court also examined the scope of Section 170 and various High Court judgments in this regard.

Section 170 of the CrPC:

- The word "custody" appearing in Section 170 of the Cr.P.C. **does not contemplate either police or judicial custody** but it merely connotes the **presentation of the accused by the Investigating Officer before the court** while filing the chargesheet.

- According to Section 170 of CrPC, the police officer should forward the report related to the case to the Magistrate all the documents or relevant extracts of the same and also the statements recorded under Section 161 of persons, on whom the prosecution rely as per Section 173(5).

4.38 GUJARAT DEFENDS ANTI-CONVERSION LAW IN HIGH COURT

The State government has contended before the Gujarat High Court its new anti-conversion law saying marriages cannot be tool for “forceful conversion.”

- The state government has stated that there is no ban on interfaith marriages in the State.

Genesis

- Two petitions filed that have challenged the newly enacted Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Act, 2021 which **deals with forcible religious conversion through marriages**.
- The high court bench observed that the amended law **keeps a sword hanging over interfaith couples** because it has created an impression that interfaith marriages are not permissible in the State.

Gujarat Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Act, 2021:

- The Act has amended the **Gujarat Freedom of Religion Act, 2003** with some stringent provisions against any individual or institution indulging in forcible religious conversion by marriage.

Key Provisions:

- The family court or other court can declare the marriage formalized only for the sake of conversion of religion or vice versa as void.
- **No person can convert another person from one religion to another** by use of force or allurement or by any fraudulent means, or help such marriage for conversion of religion,
- The act **places the burden of proof of innocence** on the person who caused the conversion or on persons assisting such act.
- The act holds all – who commits the crime, who forces another person to crime, who helps or advices another person to crime – **equally guilty**.
- A person found guilty will be **punished with minimum 3 years imprisonment** which may be extended up to **5 years** and a minimum fine of Rs 2 lakh.

- And if in case of minor, woman or someone belonging to **Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe** the punishment is minimum **4- 7 years imprisonment** and minimum fine of **Rs 3 lakh**.
- The act provides that any aggrieved person, his parents, brother, sister or any **other person related by blood**, marriage or adoption can **lodge an FIR against the person for an offence committed** under the law.
- The act provided cancellation of the registration of any organisation found violating the law, and minimum imprisonment of 3 years extendable up to 10 years and a fine of up to Rs 5 lakh.
 - Such organisation will **cease to get any financial assistance** or grant from the State Government from the date the chargesheet has been filed against the organisation.
- The offences under this act shall be deemed non-bailable and cognizable offenses and shall **not be probed by an officer below the rank of Deputy Superintendent** of Police.

4.39 Geological Survey of India Mobile App – Innovative Step Towards Making GSI Digitally Accessible To Masses

In 2020, the **Geological Survey of India** has decided to **make itself accessible** to the masses and make its presence felt digitally by launching the **GSI Mobile App (Beta Version)**.

GSI Mobile App

- The App is **divided into various sections** where it talks about the legacy of GSI, the in-house publications of the organization, various case studies on different missions of GSI, the picture gallery etc.
- The E-news division updates masses about the **latest news as far as the organization is concerned in terms of work and the career opportunities** as well as the training facilities that are available with GSI.
- It also **deals with various maps, videos and downloads** of GSI work.
- The e-book section would **give the masses an idea of the exploration works** done by GSI.
- It **connects the YouTube, Facebook and Twitter pages** of GSI from the app as well.

Significance of GSI Mobile App

- Through the App, people will become more **enlightened about various facets** of GSI activities.
- It is also **in line with the Digital India campaign** initiated by the Central Government.

- Its purpose is to **draw the attention of the student community towards the subject of Geology** and its importance in nation building.

Geological Survey of India

- It was **set up in 1851** primarily to find coal deposits for the Railways.
- It is **headquartered in Kolkata**, has six regional offices located in Lucknow, Jaipur, Nagpur, Hyderabad, Shillong and Kolkata.
- It is an attached office to the **Ministry of Mines**.

Purpose of Geological Survey of India

- It has grown into a **repository of geo-science information** required in various fields in the country and has also attained the status of a geo-scientific organization of international repute.
- Its main functions relate to **creating and updating of national geo-scientific information** and mineral resource assessment.
- Its chief role includes providing **objective, impartial and up-to-date geological expertise** and geo-scientific information of all kinds, with a focus on policy making decisions, commercial and socio-economic needs.
- It emphasizes on **systematic documentation of all geological processes** derived out of surface and subsurface of India and its offshore areas.
- Its core competence in **survey and mapping is continuously enhanced** through accretion, management, co-ordination and utilization of spatial databases.
- It functions as a '**Repository**' or '**clearing house**' for the purpose and uses latest computer-based technologies for dissemination of geo-scientific information and spatial data.

4.40 DEEN DAYAL UPADHYAYA GRAMEEN KAUSHALYA YOJANA (DDU-GKY)

Recently, around 1183 'mobilisation camps' were organised across the country under the **DeenDayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) programme** as part of the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav (AKAM) celebrations.

DeenDayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)

- It was announced in 2014 by the **Ministry of Rural Development**.

- It is a part of the **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)**, tasked with the dual objectives of adding diversity to the incomes of rural poor families and cater to the career aspirations of rural youth.
- It is uniquely focused on **rural youth** between the **ages of 15 and 35 years** from poor families.

FEATURES OF DDU-GKY

Focus on sustainability

- The DDU-GKY has **mandated a minimum of 160 hours of training** in soft skills, function English and computer literacy.
- Industry interactions have **emphasised the need for training in soft skills, team working etc.**, as more important than domain skills, which they learn on the job.

Quality Assurance Framework

- Introducing predictability in government process by **defining minimum service level benchmarks and standards, controls & audits, defaults and remedial actions** to reduce Inspector Raj in an all pervasive quality assurance framework comprising of the Guidelines & Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).
- The transparency and accountability is fostered through the **end-to-end implementation of Public Financial Management System (PFMS)** as the channel for fund disbursals and audits.
- It allows DDU-GKY to **invest in capacity building of the private sector, front-loading 25% of the training costs** so that PIAs are not constrained to invest in quality training centres.

Employing Technology in implementation

- A **Geo-Tagged Time Stamped Biometric Attendance Record** serves a dual purpose of being a monitoring tool, and also it also making candidates familiar with modern technology;
- **Provision of a Tablet PC** per candidate at the training centre which enables candidates to learn at their own pace; and
- **Presence of Computer Labs and e-Learning at Training Centres**, to ensure that all candidates have access to a wider curricula and adequate learning opportunities

Mission of DDU-GKY

- To **reduce poverty** by enabling poor for households to access gainful and sustainable employment through employment that provides regular wages.
- There is a **strong demand for the economic opportunities among the poor**, as well as immense opportunities in term of developing their work abilities.
- **Social mobilization** as well as a network of strong institutions is essential in order to develop India demographic surplus into a dividend.
- **Quality and standards** are paramount in the delivery of skilling, in order to make the rural poor desirable to both Indian and global employer.

Coverage of DDU-GKY

- DDU-GKY is **applicable to the entire country**.
- The scheme is being **implemented currently in 33 States/UTs across 610 districts** partnering currently with over 202 PIAs covering more than 250 trades across 50+sectors.

4.41 MOPLAH REBELLION A MANIFESTATION OF TALIBANI MINDSET

Recently, the former BJP national general secretary has said that the **Moplah rebellion of 1921** was one of the first manifestations of the Taliban mindset in India.

Malabar Rebellion of 1921

- It is also known as the **Moplah (Muslim) riots**.
- It had been an **uprising of Muslim tenants** against **British rulers and local Hindu landlords**.
- The uprising, which began on **August 20, 1921**, went on for several months marked by many bouts of bloodstained events.
 - August 20, 2021 marks the centenary of the Malabar rebellion.
- It largely took the **shape of guerrilla-type attacks on janmis** (feudal landlords, who were mostly upper caste Hindus) and the police and troops.
- It has often been perceived as one of the **first nationalist uprisings in southern India**.
- It has been described as a **peasant revolt**.
- In 1971, the then Kerala government had included the **participants of the rebellion in the category of freedom fighters**.

Impact of Malabar Rebellion

- The rebellion of Mappilas **inspired by religious ideology and a conception of an alternative system of administration** i.e. a Khilafat government, dealt a blow to the nationalist movement in Malabar.
- The **fanaticism of rebels, foregrounded by the British, fostered communal rift** and enmity towards the Congress.
- The exaggerated accounts of the rebellion **engendered a counter campaign in other parts of the country** against 'fanaticism' of Muslims.
- The thrust of the post-rebellion Muslim reform movement in Malabar was a **rigorous campaign against orthodoxy**.
- The traumatic experience of the uprising also persuaded **educated sections of the Muslim community in Malabar to chalk out ways to save the community** from what they saw as a pathetic situation.

Controversy around Malabar Rebellion of 1921

- **Vinayak Damodar Savarkar** was one of the first ones to **describe the Moplah rebellion as an anti-Hindu genocide** through his semi-fictional novel Moplah.
- According to another book, **The Moplah Rebellion, 1921**, Haji was an outlaw who played a key role in the rebellion.
- The book, published in 1923, and put together by the then deputy collector of the area, **C. Gopalan Nair**, is considered to be one of the most authentic accounts of the event.
 - It recorded that **murders, dacoities, forced conversions and outrages on Hindu women** became order of the day.
 - Dr. BR Ambedkar said that the **agitators actually preached the doctrine that India under the British Government was Dar-ul-Harab** and that the Muslims must fight against it and if they could not, they must carry out the alternative principle of Hijrat.

4.42 PM MODI PAYS TRIBUTES TO SOCIAL REFORMER NARAYANA GURU ON HIS JAYANTI

Recently, the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has paid tributes to **Sree Narayana Guru** on his Jayanti.

Early life of Sree Narayana Guru

- He was born on **August 22, 1856 (1032 Chingam in Malayalam calendar)** in a humble cottage in the pretty hamlet of Chempazhanthi near **Thiruvananthapuram**.
- As a child he expressed **strong aversion toward the caste discrimination** that existed in the society and often criticized his own relatives for showing such tendencies.
- After his elementary education he became the **disciple of Raman Pillai Asan**, a great Sanskrit scholar of PuthuppallyVaranappally family in Central Travancore at the age of 21.

Contributions of Sree Narayana Guru

- He was a **catalyst and leader who reformed the oppressive caste system** that prevailed in society at the time.
- His philosophy always advocated **social equality, education for all, and spiritual enlightenment**.
- He consecrated the **first temple of Lord Shiva in 1888** where an idol was ordained by a non-brahmin in Aruvippuram village of Kerala.
- In 1903, he established the **Sree Narayana Dharma ParipalanaYogam (SNDP)** as the founder and president.
- In 1913, he founded the **Advaita Ashram** at Aluva.
 - This Ashram was dedicated to a great principle – **Om SahodaryamSarvatra** (all men are equal in the eyes of God).
- The **Sivagiri pilgrimage was established in 1924** to promote the virtues of cleanliness, education, devotion, agriculture, handicrafts, and trade.

Sree Narayana Guru Jayanti

- Sree Narayana Guru Jayanti is **celebrated with great aplomb on August 23** across the state of Kerala.
- The day is also **observed as a public holiday in the state** to mark the birth anniversary of the social reformer.
- People celebrate this day by **decorating the shrines, as well as roads with flowers and dried coconut leaves**.
- **Harmonious processions and community feasts** are carried out in remembrance of the great guru.
- The **common prayers are also organized** and attended by people irrespective of caste or creed to remind people of Narayana Guru's teachings and philosophy.

4.43 Chhari Mubarak taken to Shankaracharya temple in Srinagar

Recently, the **holy Silver Mace of Lord Shiva 'Chhari-Mubarak'** was taken to historic **Shankaracharya Temple** in the summer capital, Srinagar.

Shankaracharya Temple

- It is amongst the **top religious attractions** in Srinagar dedicated to **Lord Shiva**.
- It is named after the **great philosopher Shankaracharya**, who once visited Kashmir.
- It is on top of the **Shankaracharya Hill** (also called Hill of Solomon) on the Zabarwan Mountain in Srinagar, Kashmir.
- The Hindu temple enjoys a strategic location from where **devotees and tourists can see a panoramic view** of Srinagar City.
- It is also known as **Jyeshtheshwara Temple**.
- It is accessible by a **staircase of 243 steps** and is visited by a large number of Hindu devotees during the Amarnath Yatra season.

History of Shankaracharya Temple

- The **temple dates to 200 BC**, although the present structure probably dates to the 9th century AD.
- It was **visited by Adi Shankara** and has ever since been associated with him; this is how the temple got the name Shankaracharya.
- It is also regarded as **sacred by Buddhists**.
- Some historians report that the **temple was actually a Buddhist temple during the Buddhist era** which was then changed into Hindu site of worship by Adi Shankaracharya.
- Persians and Jews call it **Bagh-i-sulaiman** or the **Garden of King Solomon**.
- According to Pandit Anand Koul (1924) the temple was originally built by the **Hindu king "Sandiman"** who, according to Koul, reigned in Kashmir from 2629 to 2564 BC.
- It was repaired by **King Gopaditya (426–365 BC)** and by **King Lalitaditya (697–734 A.D.)**.
 - **Zain-ul-Abidin repaired its roof** which had tumbled down by earthquake.
 - **Sheikh Ghulam Mohi-ud-din**, a Sikh Governor (1841–46), also **repaired its dome**.

Architecture of Shankaracharya Temple

- Shankaracharya Temple has a **20-foot tall octagonal base** that supports the square building. Inside the temple, there is a small and dark chamber which is circular.
- The ceiling is supported by **four octagonal pillars** that surround a basin where the Shivalinga encircled by a snake is established.
- It has a **high octagonal platform** supporting, approached by a flight of approximately 100 steps.
- The **main surviving shrine of the temple** is consisting of a **circular cell**.
- The **interior of the sanctum is covered by a ply board ceiling** concealing the flat sandstone slabs which are supported by two lintels bearing the load on four eight-sided column of stone in the centre.

4.44 NEW PORTAL UNDER BHUVAN “YUKTDHARA” WILL FACILITATE PLANNING OF NEW MGNREGA ASSETS USING REMOTE SENSING AND GIS BASED INFORMATION

Recently, the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for the Ministry of Science and Technology has released the **new portal under Bhuvan “Yuktdhara”**.

Yuktdhara

- It is a **Geospatial Planning Portal** meant for facilitating **Gram Panchayat Level planning** of **MGNREGA** activities across India.
- It is aptly named as word ‘Yukt’ is derived from **Yojanam, the planning** and ‘Dhara’ indicates the **flow**.
- It is a **culmination of untiring joint efforts of ISRO and Ministry of Rural development** made towards realizing a G2G service for rural planning in support of decentralized decision making.
- Yuktdhara based plans will be prepared by **grassroot functionary and verified by appropriate authorities** for relevance and resource allocation.

Significance of Yuktdhara

- It will facilitate planning of new **MGNREGA assets using Remote Sensing and GIS based information**.
- It will **serve as a repository of assets (Geotags)** created under various national rural development programmes i.e. MGNREGA, Per Drop More Crop and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana etc., along with field photographs.

- It integrates wide variety of **thematic layers, multi-temporal high resolution earth observation data** with analysis tools.
- The planners will **analyse previous assets under various schemes** and facilitates identification of new works using online tools.

BHUVAN

- It is the **national Geo-portal developed and hosted by ISRO** comprising of Geo Spatial Data, Services and Tools for Analysis.
- It has **many versatile** features such as:
 - Visualization of Satellite Imagery and Maps;
 - Analysis;
 - Free Data Download; and
 - Download Reports to name a few
- The Satellite Imageries are of **Multi-sensor, Multi-platform and Multi-temporal** in nature can be visualized in 2D and 3D.
- Varieties of **thematic maps are also hosted** for analysis of various natural resources themes.
- Bhuvan platform supports many applications that **address Governance and other Geo Spatial applications** that are being used by the Central and State Governments Departments, Academia and Industry.

4.45 THE PROCEDURE TO ARREST A CABINET MINISTER IN INDIA

Recently, three FIRs have been **registered against Union Minister and Rajya Sabha member Narayan Rane** in connection with a speech at Raigad where he spoke against Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray.

Procedure to arrest a cabinet minister in India

- If Parliament is not in session, a **cabinet minister can be arrested** by a law enforcement agency **in case of a criminal case registered against him**.
- The **Section 22 A of the Rules of Procedures and Conduct of Business** of the Rajya Sabha states that the **Police, Judge or Magistrate** would have to intimate the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha about:
 - The reason for the arrest; and
 - The place of detention or imprisonment in an appropriate form

Procedure to be followed by Chairman in case of arrest

- The Chairman is expected to **inform the Council** if it is sitting about the arrest.
- If the **council is not sitting**, he/she is expected to **publish it in the bulletin** for the information of the members.

Privileges of the Rajya Sabha members against arrest

- In civil cases, the members have **freedom from arrest during the continuance of the House and 40 days before its commencement and 40 days after its conclusion.**
 - It is mentioned under **section 135** of the Code of Civil Procedure.
- The privilege of **freedom from arrest does not extend to criminal offences** or cases of detention under preventive detention.

Arrest of a person from the precincts of the House

- Whether of a **member or of a stranger**, **no arrest can be made within the precincts of the House** without the prior permission of the Chairman/Speaker.
- **No legal process, civil or criminal, can be served within the precincts of the House** without obtaining the prior permission of the Chairman/Speaker whether the House is in Session or not.

4.46 SAROOP OF SIKH HOLY BOOK

Among the most striking images emerging from the **flight of Sikhs from Afghanistan** have been those of Union Minister Hardeep Singh Puri carrying on his head one of the **saroops of the holy Guru Granth Sahib** flown in from that country.

What is Saroop?

- Saroop is a **physical copy of Sri Guru Granth Sahib**, also called **Bir in Punjabi.**
 - **Every Bir has 1,430 pages**, which are referred to as **Ang.**
 - The **verses on every page** remain the same.
- The Sikhs consider the **Saroop of Guru Granth Sahib a living guru** and treat it with utmost respect.
- They believe that **all the 10 Gurus were the same spirit in different bodies**, and the Guru Granth Sahib is their eternal physical and spiritual form.

- It was the **fifth Sikh master, Guru Arjan Dev**, who compiled the **first Bir of the Guru Granth Sahib** in 1604, and installed it at the Golden Temple in Amritsar.
- The **tenth Sikh master, Guru Gobind Singh**, added verses penned by the ninth master, his father Guru Tegh Bahadur, and **compiled the Bir for the second and last time**.
- It was in 1708 that **Guru Gobind Singh** declared the **Guru Granth Sahib the living Guru of the Sikhs**.
 - Guru Granth Sahib is a **compendium of hymns written by six Sikh gurus, 15 saints**, including Bhagat Kabir, Bhagat Ravidas, Sheikh Farid and Bhagat Namdev, **11 Bhattas (balladeers) and four Sikhs**.

Significance of carrying Saroop on head

- The installation and transportation of Guru Granth Sahib is **governed by a strict code of conduct** called '**rehatmaryada**'.
- Under ideal circumstances, **five baptised Sikhs are required to transfer the Guru Granth Sahib** from one place to another.
- As a mark of respect, the **Bir of the Guru Granth Sahib is carried on the head**, and the person **walks barefoot**.
- Whenever a **devout sees the Bir of Guru Granth Sahib** passing by, s/he removes her shoes and bows.
- A **ceremonial whisk is waved high** over the Guru Granth Sahib either on the move or while reading from it.
- Gurdwaras have a separate resting place for the Saroop, called '**Sukh Asan Sthan**' or '**Sachkhand**' where the Guru rests at night.

Publication of copies of the Guru Granth Sahib

- There was a tradition among Punjabis, **both Sikhs and Hindus**, to **copy the Guru Granth Sahib by hand** and produce multiple copies.
- The **Udasi and Nirmla sects** also played a role in making **handwritten copies of the Birs** until the British introduced the printing press.
- The British also published several **small copies of the Guru Granth Sahib for their Sikh soldiers** so that they could carry these with them in the battlefield.

- The **Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC)** has the sole rights to **publish the Birs of the Guru Granth Sahib**, and this is done at Amritsar.

What is done with old Birs?

- **Old and worn Birs** of the Guru Granth Sahib are brought to **Goindwal Sahib in Tarn Taran district**, where they are cremated.
- These days, **only printed Birs are cremated as the SGPC** and other Sikh bodies have been trying to protect the few handwritten Birs that remain.

4.47 e-Shram Portal is in the news?

Recently, the Union Minister for Labour and Employment Bhupender Yadav has launched the logo of the **e-Shram portal**.

What is e-Shram Portal?

- The workers will be issued an **e-Shram card containing a 12 digit unique number**.
 - The e-Shram card will help in including them in **social security schemes**.
- It aims to **register 38 crore unorganised workers**, such as construction labourers, migrant workforce, street vendors and domestic workers, among others.
- A national **toll free number i.e.14434** will also be launched to assist and address the queries of workers seeking registration on the portal.

Process of registration on e-Shram Portal

- A worker can register on the portal **using his/her Aadhaar card number and bank account details**, apart from filling other necessary details like date of birth, home town, mobile number and social category.
- The registration of workers on the portal will be **coordinated by the Labour Ministry, state governments, trade unions and CSCs**.
- The **awareness campaigns would be planned across the country** to enable nationwide registration of workers.

- The workers from the unorganised sector can **begin their registration from the same day** following the launch of the portal.

4.48 AICTE AND BPR&D TO LAUNCH MANTHAN-2021

Recently, the Ministry of Education has announced that it will launching **MANTHAN-2021** at National Media Centre.

MANTHAN-2021

- It is a joint initiative of **Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D)** and **All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)**.
- It is a unique national initiative to **identify innovative concepts and technology solutions** for addressing the security challenges of the 21st century faced by our intelligence agencies.
- The prize money for the **winning teams will be Rs. 40 Lakh**.
- It will be conducted in **two phases**:
 - In the first phase, **participants are expected to submit their concepts** against the problem statements which they wish to solve on the portal.
 - In the Grand Finale, selected **participants are expected to build the solution to demonstrate their concepts** and prove to the juries that their ideas are technically feasible and more importantly implementable.

Significance of MANTHAN-2021

- The participants are expected to **develop digital solutions under 6 themes for 20 different challenge statements** using new technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Deep Learning, Augmented reality, Machine Learning, etc.
- It is basically focused on following categories:
 - **Image and Video Analytics**
 - **Sentiment Analysis**
 - **Natural Lang. Processing**
 - **Image & Video Analytics**
 - **Data Analytics**
 - **Fake Content Detection**

- Under MANTHAN-2021, the selected youths from education institutions across the country and registered start-ups will participate to **offer strong, safe and effective technology solutions** using their technical expertise and innovative skills.
- It covers all area that **needs reformation from young Innovative minds** that will help nation to build systems more secure and scalable without opting foreign tools.

Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D)

- It was **formally established in 1970**.
- It was formed with the **primary objectives** of:
 - To take direct and active interest in the issues
 - To promote a speedy and systematic study of the police problems
 - To apply science and technology in the methods and techniques used by police
- It is working with its 4 divisions of **Research, Development, Training and Correctional Administration**.
- It is under the administrative control of **Ministry of Home Affairs**

All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE)

- It was set up in November 1945 as a **national-level apex advisory body** to conduct a survey on the facilities available for technical education.
- It aims to **promote development** in the country in a coordinated and integrated manner.
- As stipulated in the **National Policy of Education (1986)**, AICTE was vested with:
 - Statutory authority for planning, formulation, and maintenance of norms & standards
 - Quality assurance through accreditation
 - Funding in priority areas, monitoring, and evaluation
 - Maintaining parity of certification & awards
 - The management of technical education in the country
- It was constituted to provide for the **establishment of an All India Council for Technical Education** with a view to proper planning and co-ordinated development of a technical education system.

4.49 GOVT LAUNCHES SAMRIDH SCHEME TO HELP STARTUPS IN THE EARLY STAGE

Recently, the **Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY)** has launched the **Start-up Accelerators of MeitY for pProduct Innovation, Development and growth (SAMRIDH)** Scheme.

SAMRIDH Scheme

- It is **Start-up Accelerators of MeitY for pProduct Innovation, Development and growth** programme of MeitY.
- It is being implemented by **MeitY Start-up Hub (MSH)**.
- It has been developed on the lines of **Silicon Valley based accelerator YCombinator**.

Objectives of SAMRIDH Scheme

- It will focus on **accelerating the 300 start-ups** by providing customer connect, investor connect, and international immersion in next three years.
- **An investment of up to ₹ 40 lakh to the start-up** based on current valuation and growth stage of the Start-Up will be provided through selected accelerators.
- It will facilitate **equal matching investment** by the accelerator / investor.

Eligibility under SAMRIDH Scheme

- Only accelerators that have been in the **incubation business for at least three years** and supported more than 50 startups, with at least 10 having a non-public business will be able to apply for the scheme.
- They **must also have operations in India** and the necessary space and infrastructure to be eligible.

Significance of SAMRIDH Scheme

- It aims to create a **conducive platform to Indian Software Product star-ups** to enhance their products and securing investments for scaling their business.
- It will provide the **funding support to the startups** and help in bringing skill sets together which will help them to become successful.
- It will pick up **startups that are ready for acceleration stage** and will provide them with funding support, mentorship and a lot of other support that is required by startups at this stage.
- It aims to further the Indian start-up growth which has seen the **emergence of 63 Unicorns is now the third largest Unicorn hub** globally with a total valuation of 168 Bn USD.

4.50 - 100 DAYS 'SUJALAM' CAMPAIGN BEGINS

Recently, the Ministry of Jal Shakti has flagged off 'SUJALAM' Campaign.

SUJALAM Campaign

- It is a '100 days campaign' as part of the 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav' celebrations.
- It aims to **create more and more ODF Plus villages** by undertaking waste water management at village level particularly through creation of 1 million Soak-pits.
- The effort of campaign would be directed towards **achieving the ODF plus status for villages** across the country in an accelerated manner in a short time.
- The **key activities** that will be organised in the villages under this campaign include:
 - Organizing Community consultations, Khuli Baithaks and Gram Sabha meetings to analyze the current situation
 - Pass resolution to maintain ODF sustainability and achieve needed number of soak pits to manage the grey water
 - Develop a 100 days' plan to undertake sustainability and soak pit construction related activities
 - Construct requisite number of soak pits
 - Retrofit toilets where needed through IEC and community mobilization and
 - Ensure all newly emerging Households in the village have access to toilets.

Objectives of SUJALAM Campaign

- It will enable **building of desired infrastructure** i.e. soak pit for management of greywater in villages.
- It will aid in **sustainable management** of waterbodies.
- It will help in **management of the wastewater** and in turn will help to revive the waterbodies.
- It would boost the momentum of **Swachh Bharat Mission-Gramin (SBMG) phase II** activities through community participation.
- It will use the **platform of awareness and behaviour change** achieved during the first phase of the SBMG.
- It will provide focus for **sustaining the same along with achieving the visual cleanliness** by the way of SLW Management.

4.51 ECI ORGANIZES TWO-DAY SVEEP CONSULTATION WORKSHOP

Recently, the Election Commission of India has organized a two-day **SVEEP (Systematic Voters' Education and Electoral Participation)** Consultation Workshop.

Highlights

- The agenda of the workshop was to review **State SVEEP Plans & conduct extensive deliberations** on the important aspects of SVEEP for a comprehensive strategy for the forthcoming elections.
- The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) observed that **each voter interacts with the election machinery** at two critical stages namely enrollment and polling day.
- The workshop stressed that the **field teams should ensure that the enrolment process is seamless** and polling experience remains pleasant and hassle free for the voters.
- The workshop elaborated on the **importance of content strategy and distribution channels** as part of the holistic communication plan.

Genesis of SVEEP

- The seed of **SVEEP was born in 2009**, out of managerial underlining of the gaps in the registration of citizens as voters and the more glaring gap in turnout from election to election.
- In India, the **turnout had historically stagnated around 55-60 percent**, thus leaving out the choices of millions of eligible citizens.
- It began with the **introduction of planned IEC (Information, Education, and Communication)** interventions in the Jharkhand elections of end-2009.

What is SVEEP?

- It is the **flagship program of the Election Commission of India** for voter education & awareness, spreading voter awareness and promoting voter literacy in India.
- Its primary goal is to **build an inclusive & participative democracy by encouraging all eligible citizens to vote** and make an informed decision & ethical choice.
- It is designed according to the **socio-economic, cultural and demographic profile of the state** as well as the history of electoral participation in previous rounds of elections.
- The **objectives** of SVEEP are:
 - Educating civilians about the importance of voting
 - Increase participation of people in elections

- Increase participation in registration and turnout

Requirements for registering to vote

- A person can enroll as a Voter if he/she:
 - is an **Indian citizen**.
 - has **attained the age of 18 years** on the qualifying date i.e. 1st of January of the year of revision of electoral roll.
 - is **ordinarily resident of the part/polling area** of the constituency where you want to be enrolled.
 - is **not disqualified to be enrolled** as an elector.

4.52 AGRICULTURE MINISTER TOMAR LAUNCHES NATIONAL FOOD AND NUTRITION CAMPAIGN

Recently, the Union Agriculture Minister has launched the **National Food and Nutrition Campaign**.

National Food and Nutrition Campaign

- It is an **initiative of Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare** with a special focus on farmers.
- It is organized by the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)**.
- Under the campaign, the **farmers associated with KVK should motivate other farmers** for improved farming.
- It will ensure **participation of all farmers in various schemes** including FPO, Agri Infra Fund, increasing the area of organic farming under traditional farming.

Need for National Food and Nutrition Campaign

- It is the responsibility of the farmers along with the government to ensure that our **products should be of better quality, meet global standards**.
- It is important that **farmers should be attracted towards costly crops**, educated youth should be attracted towards agriculture while being environment-friendly.

National Nutrition Mission?

- It is Government of India's flagship programme to **improve nutritional outcomes for children, pregnant women and lactating mothers.**
- It was launched by the Prime Minister on the occasion of the **International Women's Day on 8 March, 2018** from Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan.
- For implementation of POSHAN Abhiyaan the **four point strategy/pillars** of the mission are:
 - Inter-sectoral convergence for better service delivery
 - Use of technology (ICT) for real time growth monitoring and tracking of women and children
 - Intensified health and nutrition services for the first 1000
 - Jan Andolan
- The task of implementation of POSHAN Abhiyaan is to be carried out through the **Technical Support Unit (TSU) established at NITI Aayog.**

4.53 NITI AAYOG RELEASES NORTH EASTERN REGION DISTRICT SDG INDEX AND DASHBOARD

Recently, NITI Aayog has released the **North Eastern Region District SDG Index and Dashboard 2021–22.**

North Eastern Region District SDG Index?

- It is the **first edition of SDG Index** for the North East Region districts.
- It is developed by **NITI Aayog** and **Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MDoNER).**
 - The technical support is provided by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).**
- It is the **first of its kind in the country** as it focuses on the North Eastern Region, which is of critical significance to the country's development trajectory.
- It measures the performance of the districts of the eight States of **Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura** on the Sustainable Development Goals.
- It is based on **NITI Aayog's SDG India Index** i.e. the principal and official tool for monitoring progress on the SDGs at the national and State/ Union Territory levels.
- It aims at **delineating progress at the district level** on a basket of indicators and enhancing analytical understanding of sectoral issues as well as data gaps.
- **Districts have been classified** based on their NER District SDG Index score:
 - Aspirant: 0–49
 - Performer: 50–64



SEPTEMBER 2021



- Front-Runner: 65–99
- Achiever: 100

Significance of North Eastern Region District SDG Index

- It offers **insights into the social, economic, and environmental status** of the region and its districts in their march towards achieving the SDGs.
- It is a unique policy tool which has **immense potential to measure district level progress**, highlight critical gaps, and facilitate resource allocation.
- It will be a **handy tool for policy makers** in the eight North Eastern States, Ministry of DoNER and other Union Ministries.
- It will help in **evidence-based planning, resource allocation**, both financial as well as others, and effective supervision and monitoring of the developmental efforts for focused and balanced regional development.
- It will contribute immensely to **providing reliable and high-quality data** to design initiatives to address inter-State and intra-State disparities and accelerate SDG achievements in the region.

Key Highlights of NER SDG Index

- Out of the 103 districts considered for ranking, **64 districts belonged to the Front Runner category** while **39 districts were in the Performer category** in the composite score and ranking of districts.
- All districts in Sikkim and Tripura fall in the Front Runner category and there are **no districts in the Aspirant or Achiever categories**.
- **East Sikkim (Score 75.87) ranks first** in the region followed by districts Gomati and North Tripura (Score 75.73) in the second position.
- The score for the 103 districts ranges from **53.00 in Kiphire (NL)** to 75.87 in East Sikkim (SK).

4.54 HOW INDIA'S NEW DRONE RULES HAVE BEEN LIBERALIZED

Recently, the central government has notified the **Drone Rules 2021**, a much more liberalised regime for **unmanned aircraft systems** than what existed previously.

Key Changes to Drone Rules

- The **total number of forms** that were to be filled has been **reduced from 25 to five**.
- The **total number of fees** that are to be paid before being able to operate drones has been **reduced from 72 to just four**.
- The **approvals** which were required in earlier rules have been **abolished**. They are:
 - Unique authorisation number,
 - Unique prototype identification number,
 - Certificate of manufacturing and airworthiness,
 - Certificate of conformance,
 - Certificate of maintenance,
 - Import clearance,
 - Acceptance of existing drones,
 - Operator permit,
 - Authorisation of R&D organisation,
 - Student remote pilot licence,
 - Remote pilot instructor authorisation, and
 - Drone port authorisation
- The **quantum of fees**, which was earlier linked to the **size of drone**, has been **reduced and delinked** from the size.

Relaxations under New Drone Rules

- The **Digital Sky platform** will be developed as a **single-window platform** for the clearances that are required.
 - An **interactive airspace map will also be displayed** on the platform that will show the three zones i.e. **yellow, green and red**.
- These zones have been **demarcated to tell drone operators where they can and cannot fly** their aircraft systems.
- The **yellow zone**, which was **earlier a 45 km zone from the airport perimeter**, has now been **reduced to a 12 km zone**, meaning that outside of a 12 km radius of an airport perimeter, it would be a green zone, where drone operators no longer need permission to fly.

Security Relaxations under New Drone Rules

- Earlier, prior to issuance of a registration or licence, a **security clearance was necessary** but now the government has **done away with the need for this clearance**.
- The **foreign ownership has been allowed** on the part of companies operating drones.
- The import of drones will continue to be regulated by the **Directorate General of Foreign Trade**.
- The coverage of these rules has been **increased to cover drones up to 500 kg in weight from 300 kg earlier**, thereby bringing drone taxis under the fray too.

Significance of New Drone Rules

- The liberalised regime for **civilian drones mark a clear shift in policy** by the government to allow operations of such drones.
- It highlights the government's intent to **allow the use of drones while at the same time ensuring security from rogue drones** through the anti-rogue drone framework.
- The rules are based on the premise of **trust and self-certification**.
- It will tremendously **help start-ups and our youth working in this sector** and will open up new possibilities for innovation & business.
- It will help leverage **India's strengths in innovation, technology & engineering** to make India a drone hub.

4.55 DELHI HIGH COURT'S OBSERVATIONS ON THE 'RIGHT TO BE FORGOTTEN'

Recently, the Delhi High Court upheld the view that the **"Right to Privacy"** includes the **"Right to be Forgotten"** and the **"Right to be Left Alone"**.

Key Observation of Judiciary on Right to be Forgotten

- The court observed that a **person is entitled to protection from invasion of his/her privacy by strangers and anonymous callers** on account of such publication/streaming/transmission of the suit videos by the defendants.
- The bench noted that a coordinate bench of the High Court has already held that **"right to privacy"** includes the **right to be forgotten and the right to be left alone** as **"inherent aspects"**.
- The Delhi high court has held that an individual has the **"right to be forgotten"** and **"to be left alone"** as **facets of protection to their privacy**.

- The court said that the “right to privacy” includes the right to be forgotten and the right to be left alone as “**inherent aspects**” when a **person is being exhibited against his/her will**.

Right to be Forgotten?

- It falls under the **purview of an individual’s right to privacy**, which is governed by the **Personal Data Protection Bill** that is yet to be passed by Parliament.
- It goes in **sync with the “Right to Privacy”**, which is an integral part of **Article 21 of the Constitution**, which concerns the right to life.
- In 2017, the court said that the **right to privacy is protected as an intrinsic part of the right to life and personal liberty under Article 21** and as a part of the freedoms guaranteed by Part III of the Constitution.

Right to be Forgotten and Personal Data Protection Bill

- The Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha in 2019 and it aims to set out **provisions meant for the protection of the personal data** of individuals.
- **Clause 20 under Chapter V** of this draft bill titled “**Rights of Data Principal**” mentions the “**Right to be Forgotten**”.
 - It states that the “data principal (the person to whom the data is related) shall have the **right to restrict or prevent the continuing disclosure of his personal data** by a data fiduciary”.
- Under the Right to be forgotten, **users can de-link, limit, delete or correct the disclosure of their personal information** held by data fiduciaries.
 - A data fiduciary means **any person, including the State, a company, any juristic entity or any individual who alone or in conjunction with others determines** the purpose and means of processing of personal data.
- The **sensitivity of the personal data and information** cannot be determined independently by the person concerned, but will be overseen by the Data Protection Authority (DPA).
- The draft bill gives some provisions under which a **data principal can seek that his data be removed**, but his or her rights are subject to authorization by the Adjudicating Officer who works for the DPA.

Right to be Forgotten in other countries

- The **Center for Internet and Society** notes that the “**right to be forgotten**” gained **prominence** when the matter was referred to the Court of Justice of European Union (CJEC) in 2014 by a Spanish Court.
- In the European Union (EU), the right to be forgotten **empowers individuals to ask organisations** to delete their personal data.
 - It is provided by the EU’s **General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)**, a law passed by the 28-member bloc in 2018.
- According to the EU GDPR’s website, the right to be forgotten appears in **Recitals 65 and 66 and in Article 17** of the regulation, which states:
 - The data subject shall have the **right to obtain from the controller the erasure of personal data concerning him or her without undue delay** and the controller shall have the obligation to erase personal data without undue delay.

The EU’s highest court ruled in 2019 that the ‘**right to be forgotten**’ under **European law** would not apply beyond the borders of EU member states.

4.56 - 34 STATES/UTS NOW IMPLEMENTING RATION CARD SCHEME: GOVT

Recently, the **One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) Plan** has now become operational in **two more states/UTs-Delhi and West Bengal**, and **expanding the scheme to 34 states/UTs** covering nearly 75 Crore beneficiaries.

- The **NCT of Delhi and West Bengal** being the latest to enable the ONORC plan from 23rd July 2021 and 13th August 2021 respectively.
- The two remaining states -**Assam and Chhattisgarh are targeted** for integration under ONORC in next few months.

Genesis

- The scheme was **launched on a pilot basis in four states** in 2019.
- The government decided a **nation-wide rollout of the scheme in all states and Union Territories** by March 2021.
- The **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution** in association with State/UT Governments is implementing ‘One Nation One Ration Card’ (ONORC) plan.

- It is aimed at **nation-wide portability of ration cards** under the National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA).

One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)

- It is aimed at **enabling migrant workers and their family members to buy subsidised ration** from any fair price shop anywhere in the country under the National Food Security Act, 2013.
- It is based on technology that involves **details of beneficiaries' ration card, Aadhaar number, and electronic Points of Sale (ePoS)**.
- The system identifies a beneficiary through **biometric authentication on ePoS devices** at fair price shops.
- The system runs with the support of two portals i.e. **Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM-PDS)** and **Annavitran** which host all the relevant data.
 - The Annavitran portal **maintains a record of intra-state transactions** i.e. inter-district and intra-district and the **IM-PDS portal** records the inter-state transactions.

Factors responsible for ONORC Scheme

- The NFSA beneficiaries were **not able to access their PDS benefits outside the jurisdiction** of the specific fair price shop to which they have been assigned.
- The government envisioned the ONORC to give them **access to benefits from any fair price shop**.
- The full coverage will be possible after **100% Aadhaar seeding of ration cards has been achieved**, and all fair price shops are covered by ePoS devices.
- The idea was to **reform the Public Distribution System (PDS)**, which has been historically marred by inefficiency and leakages.

Eligibility under One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)

- Any citizen, who is declared under **Below Poverty Line (BPL) category**, will be eligible to get the benefit of this scheme across the country.
- The directions under **Section-38 of the NFSA** have been issued to all States/UTs to cover all eligible disabled persons under the NFSA.
- All States/UTs have also been advised to **identify needy persons from the weaker sections of the society** including disabled persons and issue NFSA ration cards to all eligible persons/households.

- The **beneficiaries will be identified on the basis of their Aadhaar based identification** through the electronic point of sale (PoS) device.

Significance of One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)

- The scheme aims to **ensure all beneficiaries, especially migrants get ration** (wheat, rice and other food grains) across the nation from any Public Distribution System (PDS) shop of their own choice.
- The scheme is launched with the purpose that **no poor person should be deprived of getting subsidised food grains** under the food security scheme when they shift from one place to another.
- It aims to **reduce instances of corruption by middlemen and fraudulence** in ration cards to avail benefits from different states.
- The scheme is also aimed at **reducing the incidents of hunger deaths in the country**, to further improve rankings in the Global Hunger Index.

4.57 PM TO VIRTUALLY INAUGURATE RENOVATED JALLIANWALA BAGH COMPLEX

Recently, the Prime Minister Narendra has virtually inaugurated the renovated **Jallianwala Bagh complex** in Amritsar.

Genesis

- The monument was **first opened by then President Dr Rajendra Prasad** on April 13, 1961, as a grateful nation's tribute to the victims of the massacre on April 13, 1919
- In response to the massive gathering, the **British officer Col. Reginald Edward Harry Dyer** ordered his troops to fire into the crowd, killing several hundred people.

Jallianwala Bagh Memorial

- The Prime Minister, who is the **chairperson of the Jallianwala Bagh Memorial Trust**, has dedicated the memorial to the public in the presence of other trust members.
 - The members included the **Union Culture Minister G Kishan Reddy, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh, Governor V P Singh Badnore**, and several parliamentarians from the region.
- A **28-minute Sound and Light show** re-enacted the events of April 13, 1919, to be shown free of cost every evening.

- A **Salvation Ground** has been built for visitors to sit in silence to honour the martyrs.
- Four new galleries have been created through adaptive **re-use of underutilised buildings in the complex to showcase the historical value of events** that took place in Punjab during that period.
- It also has a **sculpture of Guru Nanak Dev, Sikh warrior Banda Singh Bahadur, and a statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.**

Jallianwala Bagh Massacre?

- On April 13, which was Baisakhi, a **large crowd of people from Amritsar and neighbouring areas gathered at Jallianwala Bagh** for a public meeting in defiance of orders banning public assemblies.
- A furious **General Dyer ordered his troops to fire** into the innocent, unarmed crowd, without even issuing a warning.
- The ground was **surrounded on all sides by high walls** that made escape impossible, and as the soldiers kept shooting.

Reasons behind Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

- The **Rowlatt Act (Black Act)** was passed on March 10, 1919, **authorizing the government to imprison or confine, without a trial,** any person associated with seditious activities.
- It led to nationwide unrest and **Mahatma Gandhi initiated Satyagraha** to protest against the Rowlatt Act.
- On April 7, 1919, **Gandhi published an article called Satyagrahi**, describing ways to oppose the Rowlatt Act.

Hunter Commission on Jallianwala Bagh Massacre

- On October 14, 1919, the **Disorders Inquiry Committee** was formed to inquire about the massacre.
 - It later came to be known as the **Hunter Commission.**
- The **Hunter Commission** was directed to announce their verdict on the justifiability, or otherwise, of the steps taken by the government.

- All the British officials involved in the **administration during the disturbances in Amritsar** were interrogated including General Dyer and Mr. Irving.
- The **members** of the Hunter Commission were:
 - Chairman: Lord William Hunter, ex- Solicitor-General
 - W.F. Rice, Additional Secretary to the Government of India (Home Department)
 - Justice G.C. Rankin, Judge of the High Court, Calcutta
 - Major General Sir George Barrow, Commandant of the Peshawar Division
 - Sir Chimanlal Setalvad
 - Pandit Jagat Narayan
 - Sardar Sultan Ahmed Khan

4.58 NEW 'BH' BHARAT SERIES VEHICLE REGISTRATION

Recently, the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has introduced a **new registration mark** for new vehicles i.e. “**Bharat series (BH-series)**”.

Bharat (BH) Series Registration?

- It is an **IT-based solution for vehicle registration** by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways to facilitate seamless transfer and re-registration of vehicles.
- It is a newly introduced **number series for vehicle registration across India** specifically meant for those vehicle owners who shift from one state to another on a regular basis.
- It **signifies Bharat** and will **replace the state letters in the number plate** denoting the state of vehicle registration, like UP or DL.
- The BH series number plates will be **applicable for private vehicles as of now** which means these plates will have white background with black numbers.

Process without Bharat (BH) Series Registration

- Without the BH series mark whenever a vehicle owner moves to a new state, they need to first get a **No Objection Certificate (NoC) from the Parent State** for assignment of a new registration mark in another state.

- Then in order to get a new registration mark the **user will have to pay road tax on prorata basis** to the new State
- The user will then have to **apply for refund of the road tax in the parent State** on which is a cumbersome process and varies from one state to another.

Applicability of Bharat (BH) Series Registration

- It will be available on voluntary basis to **Defense personnel, employees of Central Government/ State Government/ Central/ State Public Sector Undertakings and private sector companies/organizations**, which have their offices in four or more States/Union territories.
- It will be available for **select vehicle owners** who are subject to frequent transfers and relocations.

Format of Bharat (BH) Series Registration

- The registration mark will be in a **YY BH #### XX format** – where:
 - **YY** denotes the **year of first registration**;
 - **BH** is code for **Bharat Series**;
 - **####** is the randomized **four digit number**; and
 - **XX** are **two alphabets**

Significance of Bharat (BH) Series Registration

- It will facilitate **free movement of personal vehicles** across States/UTs of India upon relocation to a new State/UT.
- A vehicle bearing this registration mark **shall not require assignment of a new registration mark** when the owner of the vehicle shifts from one state to another.
- For BH series, the **road tax will be paid only for 2 years**, post which, owner can move to another state and pay applicable tax of the new state.

4.59 CLASSIFICATION IN PARA SPORTS FOR ATHLETES

Recently, the **Para-athlete Vinod Kumar**, who had **won the bronze medal** in the discus throw event (F52 category) at the Tokyo Paralympics, had his **result declared void following a re-assessment** by a classification panel.

What is classification in Para sports?

- According to the International Paralympic Committee (IPC), the **purpose of classification is to make sure the best athlete wins**, based on criteria such as skill, fitness and tactics.
- The athletes are **classified according to the impact their impairment** has on key sporting activities.
- All athletes competing must be given a **sport class and sport class status to ensure a fair and level playing field** which is done by an international classification panel.
- The purpose of Classification is to **define who is eligible to compete in a Para sport and groups athletes with an eligible impairment into sports classes**, according to how much their impairment affects their ability to carry out the fundamental activities in a specific sport.

Classification of Athletes

- The athletes **undergo evaluation on-site by classifiers** who are trained by every sport's respective international federation before their competition.
- The classifiers decide on the **classification status** based on the sport and impairment type.
- The classification **may not take place** at every tournament.
- After the evaluation is over, the classification panel designates '**sports class status**' to every athlete, which indicates if evaluations are required on the same athlete in the future.

Reasons for placing athletes under review and re-evaluated

- As per the World Para Athletics classification rules, a **classification panel can decide to conduct further evaluation sessions on an athlete 'based on a number of factors.'**
- These, the rules state, include but are **not limited to situations**, where the Athlete has only recently entered Competitions, sanctioned or recognised by World Para Athletics;
 - has a **fluctuating and/or progressive Impairment/Impairments** that is/are permanent but not stable; and/or
 - has **not yet reached** full muscular skeletal or sports maturity

Eligibility Criteria for Para Sports

- The Paralympic Movement offers sport opportunities for athletes with **physical, visual and intellectual impairments** and these can be divided into **10 eligible impairment types** which must be permanent in nature.

- **Physical Impairment**

- **Impaired muscle power:** Reduced force generated by muscles or muscle groups, may occur in one limb or the lower half of the body. Examples include: spinal cord injury (complete or incomplete, tetra-or paraplegia), muscular dystrophy, post-polio syndrome and spina bifida.
- **Impaired passive range of movement:** Para athletes with impaired range of movement have a restriction or a lack of passive movement in one or more joints. Examples include: arthrogyrosis and contracture resulting from chronic joint immobilization or trauma affecting a joint.
- **Loss of limb or limb deficiency:** Para athletes with limb deficiency have total or partial absence of bones or joints as a consequence of trauma (for example traumatic amputation), illness (for example amputation due to bone cancer) or congenital limb deficiency (for example dysmelia).
- **Leg-length difference:** Para athletes that have a difference in the length of their legs as a result of a disturbance of limb growth, or as a result of trauma.
- **Short stature:** Para athletes with short stature have a reduced length in the bones of the upper and lower limbs and/or trunk. Examples include: achondroplasia, growth hormone dysfunction, and osteogenesis imperfecta.
- **Hypertonia:** Para athletes with hypertonia have an increase in muscle tension and a reduced ability of a muscle to stretch caused by damage to the central nervous system. Examples include: cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury and stroke.
- **Ataxia:** Para athletes with ataxia have uncoordinated movements caused by damage to the central nervous system. Examples include: cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury, stroke and multiple sclerosis.
- **Athetosis:** Para athletes with athetosis have continual slow involuntary movements. Examples include cerebral palsy, traumatic brain injury and stroke.

- **Visual Impairment**

- Para athletes with impaired vision have reduced or no vision caused by damage to the eye structure, optical nerves or optical pathways, or visual cortex of the brain.
- Examples include: retinitis pigmentosa and diabetic retinopathy.

- **Intellectual Impairment**

- Para athletes with an intellectual Impairment have a restriction in intellectual functioning and adaptive behaviour in which affects conceptual, social and practical adaptive skills required for everyday life.
- This Impairment must be present before the age of 18.

- Any Impairment **not listed** in the above is referred to as a **non-eligible Impairment** which includes:
 - Pain
 - Hearing impairment
 - Low muscle tone
 - Hypermobility of joints
 - Joint instability, such as unstable shoulder joint, recurrent dislocation of a joint
 - Impaired muscle endurance
 - Impaired motor reflex functions
 - Impaired cardiovascular function
 - Impaired respiratory functions
 - Impairment metabolic functions
 - Tics and mannerisms, stereotypes and motor perseveration

4.60 NINE, INCLUDING THREE WOMEN, SWORN IN AS SC JUDGES

Recently, **nine new Supreme Court judges**, including three women, were **administered their oaths** of office by Chief Justice NV Ramana.

Provision of Oath taking ceremony in Supreme Court of India

- A person appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court, before entering upon his Office, has to **make and subscribe an oath or affirmation before the President**, or some person appointed by him for this purpose.
- In his oath, a judge of the Supreme Court swears:
 - to bear **true faith and allegiance** to the Constitution of India;
 - to **uphold the sovereignty and integrity** of India;
 - to **duly and faithfully and to the best of his ability, knowledge and judgement** perform the duties of the Office without fear or favour, affection or ill-will; and
 - to uphold the **Constitution and the laws**
- The oath of office to new judges is administered in the **CJI's court room**.

Qualifications of Judges of Supreme Court

- A person to be **appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court** should have the following qualifications:
 - He should be a citizen of India.

- He should have been a judge of a High Court (or high courts in succession) for five years; or
- He should have been an advocate of a High Court (or High Courts in succession) for ten years; or
- He should be a distinguished jurist in the opinion of the president

Removal of Judges of Supreme Court

- A judge of the Supreme Court can be **removed from his Office** by an order of the **president**.
- The President can issue the **removal order only after an address by Parliament has been presented to him** in the same session for such removal.
- The address must be supported by a **special majority of each House of Parliament** (i.e., a majority of the total membership of that House and a majority of not less than two-thirds of the members of that House present and voting).
- The grounds of removal are two i.e. **proved misbehaviour or incapacity**.

5.1 BJP MP KIRODI LAL MEENA DETAINED FOR 'DISTURBING PEACE'

Recently, the BJP MP Kirodi Lal Meena was detained by police after hoisting a flag amid prohibitory orders at the **Amargarh Fort** in Jaipur.

Dispute around Amargarh Fort

- The controversy erupted when **Meena community leader** and **independent MLA** Ramkesh Meena had allegedly torn off the saffron flag at the Amargarh Fort.
- The tensions escalated between the **Meenas and Hindu outfits**.
- The members of the Meena community say the Amargarh Fort was built by a **Meena ruler predating Rajput rule in Jaipur**.
- The **Meena community members accused Hindu groups of trying to appropriate tribal symbols** into the Hindutva fold, and of changing the name of Amba Mata to Ambika Bhawani.

History of Amargarh Fort

- The fort was named Amargarh after **Raja Amar Mal ji**.

- He was an **illustrious man with a great vision**, under whose able guidance the fort was constructed almost 280 years ago.
- It is situated on a hill top, overlooking the village of **Amargarh in eastern Rajasthan** (Jaipur).
- According to historian Rima Hooja, the present form of the Amargarh Fort was given in the 18th century by **Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II**, founder of Jaipur.
- It was **designed and decorated** in such a way that one can relax and recuperate in a quiet and eco-friendly environment.
- The fort is **surrounded by forests and mountains** and has panoramic views of distant ranges and vast green field of local crops.

Meena Community

- Traditionally, the Meenas are **patrilocal, patrilineal and kin-based Society**.
- They **culturally and traditionally divide their homeland into twelve territorial units called 'Pals'** and they live in both compact villages or isolated hamlets called 'dhanis' which are uniclan in nature.
- The typical Meena village follows its **ancient pattern of settlement either on alluvial plains or on the semi-arid plateau**.
- According to 2001 census, **there are 3.8 million Meenas** and most of them are in Rajasthan.
- They are known by the **language they speak - Meena**.
- Meena tribe is believed to be a **mixture of more than one tribe**.
- It seems the **fisher men community called Meenavar** eventually became Meena, who are notoriously known as thieves and robbers.

5.2 PRIVILEGE MOTION AGAINST MINISTER UNDER REVIEW, SAYS RAJYA SABHA CHAIRMAN

Recently, the senior Congress leader K.C. Venugopal has moved the **privilege motion** against the Minister for “**misleading**” the **Parliament** on deaths due to the shortage of oxygen in the country during the second COVID-19 wave.

Privilege Motion?

- The **Members of Parliament (MPs) enjoy certain parliamentary privileges** which are bestowed on them collectively and individually so that they can discharge their duties and functions effectively.

- The **act of disregarding the immunities and rights by any MP** is regarded as a 'breach of privilege' and is a punishable offence under Laws of Parliament.
- When a breach of privilege is found, then an **MP can move a privilege motion** against those being held guilty of breach.
- **Both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha reserve the right to punish** any action of contempt (not necessarily breach of privilege) which is against its authority and dignity.

Rules for Privilege Motion

- The rules governing privilege motion are mentioned as **Rule 222 in Chapter 20 of the Lok Sabha Rule Book** and as **Rule 187 in Chapter 16 of the Rajya Sabha Rule Book**.
- According to the rules, an **MP may raise a question of breach of privilege with the Speaker or the Chairperson**, notices for which have to be sent to them before 10am.
- The **breach of privilege could be of another MP**, a committee or of the House.
- The rules mandate the notice should be regarding an **incident which has occurred recently** and that it needs the intervention of the House.

Authority of Speaker or Chairman in Privilege Motion

- The first level of scrutiny that a **privilege motion has to go through is that of the Speaker**, in case of Lok Sabha, and that of the **Chairperson** when a motion is moved in the Rajya Sabha.
- The **Speaker/Chairperson may decide on the privilege motion** at their own discretion or they may refer it to a parliamentary committee.
- If the Speaker/Chairperson admits the motion, then the **concerned member is given an opportunity to explain themselves** by making a short statement.

Privilege Motion referred to Parliamentary Committee

- In the Lok Sabha, the **Speaker nominates a committee of privileges which consists of 15 members** proportionate to the strengths of various political parties in the Lower House of Parliament.
- The **Speaker can also direct that the report be tabled before the House** and a resolution may be unanimously passed on the breach of privilege.
- The process is similar in the **Upper House**, except that the **privilege committee consists of 10 members** and is headed by the deputy chairperson of the Rajya Sabha.

5.3 TDP LEADERS PLACED UNDER HOUSE ARREST

A day ahead of their plan to visit the Kondapalli reserve forest area to ascertain facts on the alleged illegal mining there, the police placed the leaders of opposition under house arrest at their respective places.

- They alleged that the government was **misusing the police** to place the leaders under illegal house arrest with the ulterior motive of suppressing their voice against the ruling party leaders' corrupt activities.

Kondapalli reserve forest:

- The Kondapalli Reserve Forest (KRF) is one of the last remaining pristine **forests of the Krishna district of Andhra Pradesh (AP)** state and forms a part of the **western flange of Eastern Ghats**.
- It is spread over an area of 30,000 acres and is under the **protection of Andhra Pradesh Forest Department**.
 - Kondapalli — also known as the **Toy Village of Andhra Pradesh** is known for its KondapalliBommalu.
- **Fauna:** Several carnivorous animals like, leopards, wild dogs and a few others like, jackals, wolves, civet cats as well.
- The herbivorous animals in the forest include, wild boars, sambar deer, chital, barking deer, rhesus monkey and four-horned antelopes.
- Birds such as peacocks and jungle fowl are also found in the forests.
- **Flora:** Tellaponiki softwood is found in the forest which is useful in making the Kondapalli Toys.
- There might be more than 100 waterfalls and streams in the forest reserve.

5.4 ASSAM-MIZORAM BORDER DISPUTE

Recently, at least **five Assam Police personnel were killed** after the **old boundary dispute between Assam and Mizoram** exploded in violent clashes at a contested border point.

Genesis

- In October 2020, the **residents of Assam and Mizoram had clashed over territory**, in which at least eight people were injured and a few huts and small shops were torched.
- The violence spotlights the **long-standing inter-state boundary issues in the Northeast**, particularly between Assam and the states that were carved out of it.

- The **residents of Lailapur village in Assam's Cachar district clashed** with residents of localities near Vairengte in **Mizoram's Kolasib district**.

Reasons for violent clashes at Assam-Mizoram Border

- The agreement between governments of Assam and Mizoram stated that the **status quo should be maintained in no man's land** in the border area.
- The people from Lailapur **broke the status quo and allegedly constructed some temporary huts** and people from Mizoram side went and set fire on them.
- The then Deputy Commissioner of Cachar, had told that the **contested land belongs to Assam** as per the state's records.
- The Mizoram officials said that the **land claimed by Assam has been cultivated for a long time by residents of Mizoram**.
- It is told that the contested land was historically cultivated by Mizoram residents, on paper it fell within the **Singla Forest Reserve that is under Karimganj's jurisdiction**.

Genesis of the boundary dispute between Assam and Mizoram

- In the Northeast's complex boundary equations, **showdowns between Assam and Mizoram residents are less frequent** than they are between, say, Assam and Nagaland residents.
- The boundary between present-day Assam and Mizoram, 165 km long today, dates back to the colonial era, when **Mizoram was known as Lushai Hills, a district of Assam**.
- The dispute stems from a notification of 1875 that **differentiated the Lushai Hills from the plains of Cachar**, and another of 1933 that demarcates a boundary between the Lushai Hills and Manipur.
- Some minister of Mizoram believes that the **boundary should be demarcated on the basis of the 1875 notification**, which is derived from the **Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR) Act, 1873**.
- The Mizo leaders have argued in the past **against the demarcation notified in 1933** because Mizo society was not consulted.

5.5 ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS AIM TO ENCOURAGE GREATER EFFICIENCY, TRANSPARENT AND CORRUPTION FREE GOVERNANCE, ACCOUNTABILITY AND REDUCE SCOPE FOR DISCRETION



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Recently, the Union Minister of State Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions have said that Administrative reforms are a continuous process and the Government follows the maxim “Minimum Government - Maximum Governance”.

Major Administrative Reforms by Government

Mission Karmayogi

- It is a new capacity-building scheme for civil servants aimed at upgrading the post-recruitment training mechanism of the officers and employees at all levels.
- It will be delivered by setting up a digital platform called iGOTKarmayogi.
- The iGOT platform will act as a launchpad for the National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB), which will enable a comprehensive reform of the capacity building apparatus at the individual, institutional and process levels.
- NPCSCB will be governed by the Prime Minister’s Human Resource Council, which will also include state Chief Ministers, Union Cabinet ministers and experts.
- A wholly-owned Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) will be set up under Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013 to govern the iGOT-Karmayogi platform.
- The SPV will be a “not-for-profit” company and will own and manage iGOT-Karmayogi platform.
- A sum of Rs 510.86 crore will be spent over a period of 5 years from 2020-21 to 2024-25 in order to cover 46 lakh central employees.

eSamikSha

- It is a Digital Governance Platform for Easy, Instant and Secure Exchange of Information.
- It is a real time, on-line system for monitoring of follow-up action on the decisions taken during the meetings/presentations made by different Departments to the Department of Public Enterprises.

- It is online monitoring and compliance mechanism which has been developed to fast track the compliance of pending action-points/proposals /issues/projects/schemes/targets, etc. of various implementing agencies.

e-Office

- It aims to support Governance by ushering in more effective and transparent inter and Intra-Government processes.
- The vision of e-Office is to achieve a simplified, responsive, effective and transparent working of all Government Offices.
- The Open Architecture on which eOffice has been built, makes it a reusable framework and a standard reusable product amenable to replication across the Governments, at the Central, State and District levels.

Good Governance Index 2019

- It was launched, which assesses the Status of Governance and impact of various interventions taken up by the State Government and Union Territories (UTs).
- The objectives of GGI are to provide quantifiable data to compare the state of governance in all States and UTs.
- It enable States and UTs to formulate and implement suitable strategies for improving governance and shift to result oriented approaches and administration.

National Conference on e-Governance

- It provides a platform for government to engage with experts, intellectuals from industry and academic institutions to exchange experiences relating to e-Governance initiatives

- It is jointly organised by Department of Administrative Reforms & Public Grievances (DARPG), Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, and Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

National e-Governance Service Delivery Assessment

- It aims at assessing the States, UTs and Central Ministries on the efficiency of e-Governance service delivery.
- The purpose of this survey is to gain insight on the citizens' experience in availing e-services from their respective States/UTs.
- Centralized Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS)
- It is an online web-enabled system over NICNET developed by NIC, in association with Directorate of Public Grievances (DPG) and Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG).
- The Government is undertaking CPGRAMS reforms in the top grievance receiving Ministries/ Departments by enabling questionnaire guided registration process.

It aims at providing for automatic forwarding of grievances to field level functionaries thereby reducing the redress time.

5.6 INDIAN RAILWAYS ONE-STOP PASSENGERS' HELPLINE 'RAIL MADAD' LAUNCHED

Recently, the Indian Railways has launched the 'Rail Madad App'.

Rail Madad App

- It is the **integrated & innovative one-stop solution** for customer grievance, enquiry, suggestion and assistance, providing passengers the choice to access RailMadad through multiple channels.
- Under Rail Madad App, the national transporter has **merged several existing helplines** that were used for various purposes into one.
- It offers **passengers multiple choices for access** such as web, App, SMS, social media and Helpline number (139) during the journey for expeditious resolution of their complaints.

- The **helpline 139 can be used for all kinds enquiries**, and making complaints and the helpline facility is available round-the-clock in 12 languages.
- It allows passengers to **lodge complaints through Mobile APP & WEB platform** and enables them to check real-time feedback on the status of redressal of their complaints.

Salient features of Rail Madad App

- It registers a **complaint with minimum inputs from passenger** (option of photo also available), issues unique ID instantly and relays the complaint online to relevant field officials for immediate action.
 - The action taken on complaint is also **relayed to passenger through SMS**, thus fast tracking the entire process of redressal of complaints through digitisation.
- The app also **displays various helpline numbers** (e.g., Security, Child helpline etc) and provides direct calling facility for immediate assistance in one easy step.
- All modes of filing complaints including **offline and online modes are being integrated on a single platform**, therefore the resultant management reports present a holistic picture of weak/deficient areas and enable focused corrective action by officials concerned.
- The data analysis would also **generate trends on various performance parameters of a selected train/station** like cleanliness, amenities etc thus making managerial decision more precise and effective.
- Hierarchy based dashboard/reports will be available for **management at Division /Zonal/Railway board level** and sent through auto email to every concerned officer weekly.

5.7 POWER MINISTER LAUNCHES 'REFORM & REGULATORY KNOWLEDGE BASE FOR POWER SECTOR'

Recently, the Union Minister for Power and New & Renewable Energy has launched the **Reform and Regulatory Knowledge Base for Power Sector**.

- The **Regulatory Data Dashboard** was also launched by the Ministry of Power.

Genesis

- India is preparing itself for the next generation by modernisation, but the **process of making our system sustainable** is work in progress.

- India has established **one grid for the country and one unified market for power** free from long term Power Purchasing Agreements (PPAs).
- The regulatory framework is the **key to sustainability and the regulators exist to maintain a level playing field** and at the same time to protect rights of the consumers.
- The transition from **fossil fuels to green hydrogen is the need of the hour and green consciousness** has already emerged in the industry but technology problems need to be resolved.

Reform and Regulatory Knowledge Base for Power Sector

- It is an **e-certification program to provide regulatory training** to the practitioners from diverse backgrounds.
- It has been developed by **IIT Kanpur**.

Regulatory Data Dashboard

- It is an **e-compendium of data** containing State-wise details of tariff and DISCOM performance.
- It has been developed by **IIT Kanpur**.
- It would **assist benchmarking of the sector performance**, over time and across the power sector utilities.
- It would help **regulators and policy makers as well as the entities themselves** to identify areas for improvement.

5.8 PM MODI LAUNCHES UJJWALA YOJANA 2.0; HANDS OVER LPG CONNECTIONS TO WOMEN IN UP

Recently, the Prime Minister has launched **Ujjwala 2.0 (Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana – PMUY)** from Mahoba district of Uttar Pradesh.

Features of Ujjwala 2.0

- The enrolment procedure will **require minimum paperwork** and in Ujjwala 2.0, **migrants will not be required** to submit ration cards or address proof.
- It will give **maximum benefit to lakhs of migrant workers' families** as they have to give a self-declaration of the address for getting a gas connection.
- It will provide the **first refill and hotplate free of cost** to the beneficiaries

- The one crore additional connections under Ujjwala 2.0 aim to **provide deposit-free LPG connections** to those low-income families who could not be covered under the earlier phase of PMUY.

Significance of Ujjwala Scheme

- Apart from a deposit-free LPG connection, a **free refill worth over Rs 800 and a free stove** will be provided to the beneficiaries.
- It was launched as a flagship scheme with an objective to **make clean cooking fuel such as LPG available to the rural and deprived households** which were otherwise using traditional cooking fuels.
- It aims to **safeguard the health of women & children** by providing them with a clean cooking fuel – LPG.
- It aims to provide a great boost to the **‘Make in India’ campaign** as all the manufacturers of cylinders, gas stoves, regulators, and gas hose are domestic.

Ujjwala 1.0?

- It was **launched in 2016** from Ballia in Uttar Pradesh.
- It was introduced by the **Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas** which aims to make available cooking fuel such as LPG to rural households.
- In the first phase of the scheme, **8 crore poor, dalit, deprived, backward and tribal families** were given free gas connections.
- Under the scheme, a target was set to provide LPG connections to **five crore women members of BPL households**.
- The scheme was expanded in April 2018 to include women beneficiaries from seven more categories such as **SC/ST, those under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (PMAY), beneficiaries of the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY), forest dwellers, most backward classes, tea gardens and Islands**.

Eligibility Criteria under Ujjwala Scheme

- The enrollment procedure for PMUY Ujjwala 2.0 requires **minimal paperwork**.
- The migrants will **not be required to submit ration cards or address proof** to get the benefit.
- The **eligibility criteria** for the scheme are:

- The applicant must be a **woman**
- The age of the woman should be **more than 18 years**
- She must be from a **BPL family**
- She should have a **BPL card and ration card**
- There **should not be LPG Connection** in the name of any family member of the applicant

5.9 Govt responsible for disruption of Parliament proceedings, must discuss Pegasus issue: Congress

Recently, the **Parliament's Monsoon Session ended on a stormy note** two days ahead of schedule.

- Opposition parties had **disrupted both Houses over the government's unwillingness to allow discussion** on the Pegasus snooping scandal, the farmers' protests, and the rise in prices, especially of auto fuels.

Highlights

- According to PRS Legislative Research data, the **Monsoon Session was the third least productive Lok Sabha session** of the last two decades, with a productivity of just 21 per cent.
- The **Rajya Sabha logged a productivity of 28 per cent**, its eighth least productive Session since 1999.
- According to PRS Legislative Research records since 1999, the **worst Session in terms of productivity for both Houses** was the Winter Session of 2010.
- According to PRS data, **Lok Sabha took only 34 minutes on average to pass a Bill**, while Rajya Sabha did it in 46 minutes.
- **Rajya Sabha sat for 28 hours and 21 minutes** against the scheduled time of 97 hours and 30 minutes, losing 76 hours and 26 minutes to interruptions.

Causes of Disruption in Parliamentary Proceedings

- The **dissatisfaction in Members of Parliament (MPs)** is because of inadequate time for airing their grievances.
- The **unresponsive attitude of the government and the retaliatory posture** of the treasury benches lead to frequent disruptions.
- The political parties **not adhering to parliamentary norms and disciplining their members** and breaches the code of conduct.

- The **absence of prompt action against disrupting MPs** under the legislature's rules also cause disruptions in Parliamentary Sessions.
- When a contentious issue crops up, the government dithers on debating it, leading to **Opposition MPs violating the conduct rules and disrupting the proceedings of Parliament.**
- There are **lack of avenues for the Opposition to either force the government to convene a parliamentary session** or set the agenda of Parliament.

Impact of Disruption in Parliamentary Proceedings

- The **time spent on discussion and passage of Bills came down drastically** as the government did manage to push through a large volume of legislation.
- The successive governments have **shied away from increasing the working days** of Parliament.
- The conventional wisdom says it is the **Opposition which gains because it can grand stand on issues to grab voter attention**, not let crucial bills get passed and force the government to take action (or not) on certain issues.
- The **speaker's rulings are seen as biased and politically motivated** because s/he does not resign from the party.

Measures against Disruption in Parliamentary Proceedings

- There should be an **increase in the working days of Parliament and our legislature should meet throughout the year**, like parliaments of most developed democracies.
 - In the United Kingdom, where Parliament meets over 100 days a year, opposition parties get 20 days on which they decide the agenda for discussion in Parliament.
 - The main opposition party gets 17 days and the remaining three days are given to the second-largest opposition party.
- The **decisions of the House should be passed on opposition days** and are an opportunity for the opposing parties to focus national attention on issues that it deems crucial.
- There should be a **deepening of Parliament's role as the forum for deliberation** on critical national issues.
 - It is the **only mechanism to ensure that disrupting its proceedings** or allowing them to be disrupted ceases to be a viable option.
- The government may be **forced to engage with the Opposition** more if there is a rule for Parliament to sit for a minimum number of days in a year.

- The speaker also needs to ensure that certain rules regarding introduction and passage of bills are strictly followed in order to facilitate more effective participation by members.

5.10 POWER MINISTRY CIRCULATES DRAFT RULES FOR ALLOWING GENCOS TO SELL ELECTRICITY TO THIRD PARTY

The Ministry of Power has circulated a **draft Electricity (Late Payment Surcharge) amendment Rules, 2021**.

Major Highlights:

1. Option to sell power to third parties:

- The **power generating companies** are being given an **option to sell power** to third parties and recover their costs.
- If a **distribution licensee** has any payment, including late payment surcharge, outstanding after the **expiry of 7 months** from the due date as prescribed in the PPA (power purchase agreement), the generating company may **sell power to any consumer** or any other licensee or power exchanges, for the period of such default.

2. First in, first out for payment:

- The rules aim to bring **transparency** and reduce the burden of **distribution licensee** by adopting principle of **first in, first out** for payment by distribution licensees.
- All the bills payable by a **distribution licensee** to a generating company or a trading licensee for power procured from it or to a transmission licensee shall be **time-tagged** with respect to the prescribed date of payment specified in PPA.
- The payment shall be **made by the distribution licensee**:
 - First against the **oldest procurement** of power
 - Then to the **second oldest procurement** and so on
 - This is to ensure that payment against a procurement is not made unless and until all procurement older than it have been paid for.

Significance:

- The proposed amendments are said to be in the **interest of the electricity consumers** and the **power sector** as a whole.

5.11 NTPC COMMISSIONS THE LARGEST FLOATING SOLAR PV PROJECT IN INDIA

Recently, the **Ministry of Power** has commissioned the largest **Floating Solar PV Project** in the country.

India's Largest Floating Solar PV Project

- It has been commissioned by the **National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) Ltd.**
- It is a project of **25MW** on the reservoir of its **Simhadri thermal station** in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.
- It is the first solar project to be set up under the **Flexibilisation Scheme**, notified by the Government of India in 2018.
- The **cooling effect of water minimises temperature-related losses**, reducing evaporation rate of water bodies, and lowering maintenance costs.

Significance of India's Largest Floating Solar PV Project

- It has a **unique anchoring design** is spread over 75 acres in an RW reservoir.
- It has the **potential to generate electricity** from more than 1 lakh solar PV modules.
- It would not only **help to light around 7,000 households** but also **ensure at least 46,000 tons of CO₂** are kept at arm's length every year during the lifespan of this project.
- It is expected to **save 1,364 million litres of water per annum** which would be adequate to meet the yearly water requirements of 6,700 households.
- It is considered as a **game-changer in India's ambition to create 450 GW** (gigawatts) of renewable energy capacity.



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5.12 PM CHAIRS 37TH PRAGATI - PRO ACTIVE GOVERNANCE AND TIMELY IMPLEMENTATION

Recently, the Prime Minister has chaired the 37th **Pro Active Governance and Timely Implementation (PRAGATI)** meeting.

PRAGATI Platform

- It is a **multi-purpose and multi-modal platform** that is aimed at **addressing common man's grievances**, and simultaneously **monitoring and reviewing important programmes and projects** of the Government.
- It was launched in **2015**.
- It is a **three-tier system** (PMO, Union Government Secretaries, and Chief Secretaries of the States).
- The Prime Minister will hold a monthly programme where he will **interact with the Government of India Secretaries, and Chief Secretaries** through Video-conferencing enabled by data and geo-informatics visuals.

Significance of PRAGATI Platform

- It is aimed at **starting a culture** of Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation.
- It is a **robust system for bringing e-transparency and e-accountability** with real-time presence and exchange among the key stakeholders.
- It uniquely bundles three latest technologies: **Digital data management, video-conferencing** and **geo-spatial technology**.
- It offers a unique combination in the **direction of cooperative federalism** since it brings on one stage the Secretaries of Government of India and the Chief Secretaries of the States.

5.13 "KARMAYOGI" DIGITAL LEARNING FACILITY AT ISTM, DELHI

Recently, the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions has inaugurated the "**Karmayogi**" **Digital Learning Facility**.

"Karmayogi" Digital Learning Facility

- It is launched for Civil Servants at the **Institute of Secretariat Training & Management (ISTM)**, a premier Central Training Institution under the Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT).
- It will help further **extending the citizen centric reforms initiated by the Government** under leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi.
- It is meant to **upgrade the skills of Central Government** officers and personnel.

Mission Karmayogi-National Program for Civil Services Capacity Building

- It is a **new capacity-building scheme for civil servants** aimed at upgrading the post-recruitment training mechanism of the officers and employees at all levels.
- It will be delivered by setting up a digital platform called **iGOTKarmayogi**.
- The iGOT platform will act as a launchpad for the **National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building (NPCSCB)**, which will enable a comprehensive reform of the capacity building apparatus at the individual, institutional and process levels.
- NPCSCB will be governed by the **Prime Minister's Human Resource Council**, which will also include state Chief Ministers, Union Cabinet ministers and experts.
- A wholly-owned **Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)** will be set up under **Section 8 of the Companies Act, 2013** to govern the iGOT-Karmayogi platform.
- The SPV will be a **"not-for-profit" company** and will own and manage iGOT-Karmayogi platform.
- A sum of Rs 510.86 crore will be spent over a **period of 5 years from 2020-21 to 2024-25** in order to cover 46 lakh central employees.

Significance of Mission Karmayogi

- It will radically **improve the Human Resource management practices** in the Government.
- It will use **scale & state of the art infrastructure** to augment the capacity of Civil Servants.
- It aims to **prepare Civil Servants for the future** by making them more creative, constructive & innovative through transparency and technology.

5.14 FIVE TRUCKERS KILLED BY MILITANTS IN ASSAM'S DIMA HASAO

Recently, a suspected militant attack left five truckers dead in **Assam's Dima Hasao** hill district.

- According to police, intelligence inputs suggest that an outfit called the **Dimasa National Liberation Army (DNLA)** was behind the attack.

Dimasa National Liberation Army (DNLA)?

- It is a **new insurgent group**, formed in 2019.
- It was committed to **revamp the national struggle** and fight for the **liberation of a sovereign, independent** Dimasa Nation.
- It aimed to “develop a **sense of brotherhood among the Dimasa** and also to rebuild the trust and faith among the Dimasa society for regaining the Dimasa Kingdom”.

Who are the Dimasas?

- The **Dimasas (or Dimasa-Kacharis)** are the earliest known **rulers and settlers of Assam**.
- They now live in **Dima Hasao, Karbi Anglong, Cachar, Hojai and Nagaon districts** of central and southern Assam, as well as parts of **Nagaland**.
- The book ‘**A History of Assam**’ describes the Dimasa-Kacharis as “**aborigines**” or the “**earliest known inhabitants of the Brahmaputra Valley**”.
- Prior to Ahom rule, the **Dimasa kings ruled large parts of Assam** along the south bank of the Brahmaputra between the 13th and 16th centuries.
- They are believed to be the **descendants of the rulers** of the ancient **Kamarupa kingdom**.
- Their earliest historically known capital was **Dimapur (now in Nagaland)**, and later **Maibang in North Cachar Hills**.

Dima Hasao

- The hill districts of Assam i.e. **Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao** (earlier North Cachar Hills) have had a long history of insurgency by Karbi and Dimasa groups.
- Both districts are now protected under the **Sixth Schedule of the Constitution**, and allows for greater political autonomy and decentralised governance in certain tribal areas of the Northeast.
 - They are run by the **North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council** and the **Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council** respectively.
- In Dima Hasao, the **demand for statehood** began in the 1960s, along with other tribal sections of undivided Assam.

- **Karbi Anglong and North Cachar remained with Assam** on a promise of more power by the then government, including implementation of Article 244 (A), which allows for an ‘autonomous state’ within Assam in certain tribal areas.



Reasons for insurgency in Northeast India

- **Historical absence of pre-British and British colonial polices:** The absence of historical linkages has created a space for later day feelings of cultural and political differences amongst ethnic communities with the rest of India.
- **Use of force as an effective way:** Most of the ethnic communities view ‘the use of force’ as more effective than non-violent dissent in getting New Delhi's attention which is physically so far away.

- **Continuous lack of economic opportunities:** It creates incentives for unemployed youths to join armed movements where they earn a salary.

Aid from neighbouring countries: The existence of external help from Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar has perpetuated the insurgencies.

5.15 RIGHT TO MOVE, RESIDE ACROSS INDIA CANNOT BE REFUSED ON 'FLIMSY GROUNDS': SUPREME COURT

Recently, the Supreme Court has said that a person's **fundamental right to reside and to move about freely anywhere in India** cannot be refused on "flimsy grounds".

Key Highlights

- The bench of Justices Indira Banerjee and V Balasubramanian was hearing an **externment order**, issued by a deputy commissioner of police in Maharashtra against journalist Rahmat Khan.
- An externment order was issued under **Section 56(1)(a)(b) of the Maharashtra Police Act**.
 - The section provides for the **removal of individuals from an area**, if the authorities suspect that they may commit an offence.
- The court said that the FIRs against Khan were filed because of his complaints and described them as "**vindictive and retaliatory**".
- The judges also clarified that **sections 56 to 59 of the Maharashtra Police Act particularly applied to the elements of society** that cannot be punished by penal action after judicial trial.

What is Fundamental Right to Move Freely?

- **Article 19(1)(d)** guarantees the citizen the **right to move freely throughout the territory of India**.
- He/she can **move freely from one state to another** or from one place to another within a state.
- The grounds of **imposing reasonable restrictions** on this freedom are two, namely, the interests of general public and the protection of interests of any scheduled tribe.
- The **entry of outsiders in tribal areas is restricted** to protect the distinctive culture, language, customs and manners of scheduled tribes and to safeguard their traditional vocation and properties against exploitation.
- The freedom of movement has two dimensions, viz, **internal** (right to move inside the country) and **external** (right to move out of the country and right to come back to the country).



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- **Article 19** protects only the **first dimension**.
- The **second dimension** is dealt by **Article 21** (right to life and personal liberty).

What is Fundamental Right to Reside?

- **Article 19(1)(e)** guarantees the citizen the **right to reside and settle in any part of the territory** of the country.
- This right has two parts:
 - The **right to reside in any part of the country**, which means to stay at any place temporarily; and
 - The **right to settle in any part of the country**, which means to set up a home or domicile at any place permanently
- The State can impose **reasonable restrictions on the exercise** of this right on two grounds, namely, the interest of general public and the protection of interests of any scheduled tribes.
- The **right of outsiders to reside and settle in tribal areas is restricted** to protect the distinctive culture, language, customs and manners of scheduled tribes and to safeguard their traditional vocation and properties against exploitation.

About Article 19 of the Indian Constitution

- **Article 19(1)** states that All citizens shall have the **Right to Freedom** (Protection of certain rights regarding freedom of speech, etc):
 - to freedom of speech and expression;
 - to assemble peaceably and without arms;
 - to form associations or unions;
 - to move freely throughout the territory of India;
 - to reside and settle in any part of the territory of India; and
 - to practice any profession, or to carry on any occupation, trade or business
- The **clause (2)** states that nothing in sub-clause (a) of clause (1) shall affect the operation of any existing law, or prevent the State from making any law, in so far as such law imposes reasonable restrictions on the exercise of the right conferred by the said sub-clause in the interests of:
 - The sovereignty and integrity of India;
 - The security of the State;
 - The friendly relations with foreign States;

- Public order, decency or morality or in relation to contempt of court; and
- Defamation or incitement to an offence
- These six rights are **protected against only state action** and **not private individuals**.
- These rights are **available only to the citizens and to shareholders of a company** but not to foreigners or legal persons like companies or corporations, etc.
- The State can impose '**reasonable**' **restrictions on the enjoyment of these six rights** only on the grounds mentioned in the Article 19 itself and not on any other grounds.

6.1 WORLD'S FIRST REPROGRAMMABLE COMMERCIAL SATELLITE LAUNCHED INTO SPACE ON ARIANE 5 ROCKET

The **world's first commercial fully reprogrammable satellite** has been launched, **ushering in a new era of more flexible communications**. Unlike conventional models that are designed and "**hard-wired**" on Earth and **cannot be repurposed once in orbit**, the **Eutelsat Quantum** is based on so-called **software-defined technology** that allows users to **tailor the communications to their needs** -- almost in real-time.

- Because it can be **reprogrammed** while orbiting in a **fixed position 35,000km** (22,000 miles) above the Earth, the **Quantum can respond to changing demands for data transmission and secure communications** during its **15-year lifetime**.
- The **3.5 tonne Quantum model** has **eight communications beams**, each of which can be modified to change its area of coverage and also the power of the signal it emits.
- Using software made available to the customer, these changes can be made "**in a matter of minutes**", according to Eutelsat.
- This means the **satellite can be used to provide mobile coverage** for moving objects such as **aircraft and oceangoing vessels**, or coverage after a **natural disaster** or for one-off events.
- And at a time of growing concern over **digital security** – as well as the possible **weaponising of space** – Quantum is able to pinpoint the **origin of signals emitted with or without malicious intent** and take action to remedy any interference.
- The Quantum will cover a **large area from west Africa to Asia**.

6.2 BIOTECH-PRIDE GUIDELINES

Union Minister of Science & Technology released “Biotech-PRIDE (Promotion of Research and Innovation through Data Exchange) Guidelines developed by Department of Biotechnology (DBT), Ministry of Science and Technology.

- The **Biotech-PRIDE (Promotion of Research and Innovation through Data Exchange) Guidelines** will facilitate this and **enable exchange of information** to promote research and innovation in different research groups across the country. Singh also launched the website of the **Indian Biological Data Centre (IBDC)**.
- The guidelines are aimed at providing a **well-defined framework and guiding principle** to facilitate and enable sharing and exchange of biological knowledge, information and data and is **specifically applicable to high-throughput**, high-volume data generated by research groups across the country, the statement said.
- These guidelines **do not deal with generation of biological data** but are a mechanism to share and exchange information and knowledge generated according to existing **laws, rules, regulations and norms** of the country.
- They will ensure **data sharing benefits, maximise use, avoid duplication**, maximise integration, ownership information, better decision-making and equity of access.
- These guidelines are a **mechanism for sharing data publicly and within a reasonable period of time** after data-generation. Thus, the **utility of the data will be maximum**, it said.
- Resultantly, accrual of **benefit of public investment for data generation** will not be compromised.
- Minister Singh said initially these guidelines **will be implemented through the IBDC** at the **Regional Centre for Biotechnology** supported by the **Department of Biotechnology (DBT)**.
- Other existing datasets and data centres will be **bridged to this IBDC** which will be called **bio-grid**.

Genesis

- This **bio-grid will be a national repository for biological knowledge, information and data** and will be responsible for **enabling its exchange, developing measures for safety**, standards and quality for datasets and establishing detailed modalities for accessing data.
- The guidelines will be helpful **to harmonise, synergise and encourage data sharing** for research and analysis in the country and **to promote scientific work** and foster progress by building on previous work.

- Describing the release of **Biotech-PRIDE** as the **first of its kind by the DBT**, the Minister said **India's rank is four among the top 20 countries** contributing biological databases.
- The government **invests a large amount of public funds** to generate data in various sectors, including in **biosciences for knowledge generation**, to gain deep insights into intricate biological mechanisms and other processes and for translation.

6.3 PANGOLIN FOUND WANDERING ON NOIDA ROADS RESCUED

Recently, a **pangolin was rescued** by a team from Noida Phase-3 Police Station after being spotted on the roadside in the Behlopur area.

Pangolins

- Pangolins are **solitary, primarily nocturnal animals** and are easily recognized by their full armor of scales.
- Pangolins are the **only mammals wholly-covered in scales** and they use those scales to protect themselves from predators in the wild.
- There are **eight species of pangolins** which are found on two continents:
 - **The four species live in Africa:** Black-bellied pangolin (*Phataginus tetradactyla*), White-bellied pangolin (*Phataginustricuspis*), Giant Ground pangolin (*Smutsia gigantea*) and Temminck's Ground pangolin (*Smutsiatemminckii*).
 - **The four species found in Asia:** Indian pangolin (*Manis crassicaudata*), Philippine pangolin (*Manis culionensis*), Sunda pangolin (*Manis javanica*) and the Chinese pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*).
- The Indian Pangolin is listed as '**Endangered**' in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species and protected under **Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.
- Pangolins eat ants, termites and larvae and are often known as "**the scaly anteater**".
- In 2016, the **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)** had voted to ban the commercial trade in pangolins

6.4 NCSM OF CULTURE MINISTRY HAS TAKEN UP 14 PROJECTS FOR SETTING UP NEW SCIENCE CENTRES UNDER SPoCS SCHEME

Recently, the **National Council of Science Museums (NCSM)** has developed a chain of science museums and science centers throughout the Country including Science Cities through **Scheme for Promotion of Culture of Science (SPoCS)**.

Scheme for Promotion of Culture of Science (SPoCS)

- The **National Council of Science Museums (NCSM)** is the **implementing agency** to set up science cities/centres and Innovation Hubs.
- The **State Governments/Union Territories** and the **Societies / Authorities promoted by the State/UT Govts.** for the purpose of Science City/Science Centre/Innovation hubs shall be eligible for financial assistance.
- It provides for **setting up of Science Cities and Science Centres in all the States** of the country subject to availability of funds for the purpose.

Components of Scheme for Promotion of Culture of Science (SPoCS)

Science City

- It is aimed to be a **popular tourist attraction** of the location.
- It provides an **experiment based immersive learning ambience** to inculcate a spirit of inquiry, foster creative talent and create scientific temper in the community as a whole.
- It is characterised by its two pronged channel of communication - **exhibits and activities**.

Science Centre

- It provides the **scope of doing science' adopting a hands-on approach** for which it offers to the visitor a number of experimental options through which they can discover the scientific concept themselves.

Innovation Hubs

- It would be **co-located in the existing Science Cities/Science Centres**, science museums and non-formal educational institutions that promote creativity & inspire innovations.

Objectives of Scheme for Promotion of Culture of Science (SPoCS)

- To portray the **growth of science and technology and their application in industry and human welfare**, with a view to develop scientific attitude and temper and to create, inculcate and sustain a general awareness amongst the people;
- To create **awareness & enhance public understanding, appreciation & engagement** of public in the process of Science& technology:
- To popularise **science and technology for the benefit of students and for the common man of the region** by organising exhibitions, seminars, popular lectures, science camps and various other programmes,
- To supplement **science education given in schools and colleges and to organise various out-of-school educational activities** to foster a spirit of scientific inquiry and creativity among the students;
- To **design, develop and fabricate science museum exhibits, demonstration equipment and scientific teaching aids** for science education and popularisation of science;
- To **organise training programmes** for science teachers students/young entrepreneurs/ technicians/physically challenged/housewives and others on specific subjects of science, technology and industry.

National Council of Science Museums (NCSM)

- It is an **autonomous society** under the Ministry of Culture, Government of India.
- It was **established in 1978**.
- It administers **25 Science Centres/Museums** spread all over India.
- Science City, Kolkata, Birla Industrial and Technological Museum (BITM), Kolkata, Nehru Science Centre, Mumbai, Visvesvaraya Industrial and Technological Museum (VITM), Bangalore and National Science Centre, Delhi are **National level centres** of NCSM.

6.5 JAMES WEBB SPACE TELESCOPE (JWST)

NASA is set to launch the large infrared **James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)** touted as the “premier observatory” of the coming decade.

James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)

- It is an **orbiting infrared observatory** that will complement and extend the discoveries of the Hubble Space Telescope, with longer wavelength coverage and greatly improved sensitivity.

- Webb was formerly known as the "**Next Generation Space Telescope**" (NGST) and it was renamed in 2002 after a former NASA administrator, James Webb.
- It will be a **large infrared telescope with an approximately 6.5 meter primary mirror** which will be launched on an Ariane 5 rocket from French Guiana in 2021.
- It is an international collaboration between **NASA, the European Space Agency (ESA), and the Canadian Space Agency (CSA)**.

Purpose of James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)

- The longer wavelengths enable Webb to **look much closer to the beginning of time** and to hunt for the unobserved formation of the first galaxies.
- It will be the **premier space observatory for astronomers worldwide**, extending the tantalizing discoveries of the Hubble Space Telescope.
- It will study every phase in the history of **our Universe, ranging from the first luminous glows after the Big Bang, to the formation of solar systems**.

Comparison between Webb and Hubble Telescopes

Wavelength

- Webb will observe **primarily in the infrared** and will have four science instruments to capture images and spectra of astronomical objects.
- The instruments on **Hubble can observe a small portion of the infrared spectrum** from 0.8 to 2.5 microns, but its **primary capabilities are in the ultra-violet and visible parts** of the spectrum from 0.1 to 0.8 microns.

Size Comparisons

- Webb will have an **approximately 6.5 meter diameter primary mirror**, which would give it a significantly **larger collecting area** than the mirrors available on the current generation of space telescopes.
- Hubble's mirror is a **much smaller 2.4 meters in diameter** and its corresponding collecting area is 4.5 meter square, giving Webb around 6.25 times more collecting area.

Orbit

- The Hubble Space Telescope **orbits around the Earth at an altitude of ~570 km above it.**
- Webb will **not actually orbit the Earth**, instead it will **sit at the Earth-Sun L2 Lagrange point**, 1.5 million km away.
- At the L2 point **Webb's solar shield will block the light from the Sun, Earth, and Moon** which will help Webb stay cool, which is very important for an infrared telescope.

6.6 NEW FROG SPECIES DISCOVERED IN WESTERN GHATS, NAMED AFTER FORMER DU VICE-CHANCELLOR

Recently, a team of Delhi University researchers has discovered a new frog species named '**MinervaryaPentali**' in the Western Ghats.

- The study has also resolved the **identity and taxonomic status** of all known members of the genus from Peninsular India.

MinervaryaPentali

- It is named after former DU Vice-Chancellor and plant geneticist **Deepak Pental**.
- It is **endemic** to the southern Western Ghats.
- It was discovered from the **Western Ghats biodiversity hotspot**, extending along the southwest coast of the Indian Peninsula.
- It is among the **smallest known Minervarya frogs**.
- It was identified based on multiple criteria, such as **external morphology, DNA and calling pattern**.

Minervarya Frog

- It is also known as **Minervaryasahyadris**.
- It is a species of frog in the **family Dicroglossidae**.
- It is **endemic** to Western Ghats of India.
- It is known from **Gundia in Karnataka and Calicut** and neighboring areas in Kerala at elevations between 40 and 200 m.
- It is a **semi-aquatic, terrestrial species**.
- It has been found from **grassy areas adjacent to paddy fields, disturbed (open) moist tropical forest, stream banks and abandoned quarries**.
- It is listed as '**Endangered**' under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

6.7 SHARKS FLEEING TOXIC RED TIDE TAKE REFUGE IN FLORIDA CANAL

Recently, hundreds of sharks in West Florida have headed inland to escape the **deadly red tide** that's killed more than 600 tons of marine life in the region.

Red Tide?

- It is a **phenomenon caused by algal blooms** during which algae become so numerous that they **discolor coastal waters**.
- It is a **global phenomenon** found in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Denmark, England, France, Guatemala, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, New Guinea, Peru, the Philippines, Romania, Russia, Scotland, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, the United States, and Venezuela.
- The name '**red tide**' comes from the fact that **overgrowth of algae** can cause the color of the water to turn **red, as well as green or brown**.

Causes of Red Tide

- The **species in the United States** that release the harmful toxins include:
 - **Alexandriumfundyense** - found along the Atlantic coast from the Canadian Maritimes to southern New England
 - **Alexandriumcatenella** - found along the Pacific coast from California to Alaska
 - **Karenia brevis** - found in the Gulf of Mexico along the west coast of Florida
- The factors influencing red tide events include **warm ocean surface temperatures, low salinity, high nutrient content, calm seas, and rain followed by sunny days** during the summer months.
- The algae related to red tide can **spread or be carried long distances by winds, currents, storms, or ships**.
- **Harmful algal blooms, or HABs, occur when colonies of algae** (simple plants that live in the sea and freshwater) grow out of control while producing toxic or harmful effects.

Impact of Red Tide

- The algal bloom may also **deplete oxygen in the waters and/or release toxins** that may cause illness in humans and other animals.
- The red tide algae make **potent natural toxins**.
- It is unknown why these toxins are created, but some can be **hazardous to larger organisms through the processes of biomagnification and bioaccumulation**.
- **Large fish kills and several mammalian diseases and deaths** have been attributed to consumption of shellfish during red tide algal blooms.

6.8 - 13 PLANTS UNDER SATAT HAVE INITIATED SUPPLY OF CBG

Recently, the Minister of State for Petroleum and Natural Gas has informed that as on 22 July 2021, the supply of Compressed Bio Gas (CBG) initiated from 13 CBG plants under **Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT)** initiative.

SATAT Scheme?

- It was launched in 2018 by the **Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas** in association with **Indian Oil Corporation Ltd., Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd. and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd.**
- It envisages **targeting production of 15 MMT of CBG** from 5000 plants by 2023.
- It aims to set up **Compressed Bio-Gas production plants** and make CBG available in the market for use as a green fuel.

Significance of SATAT Scheme

- It will **provide an investment of 1.75 lakh crore**, an additional revenue source to farmers, and 75,000 direct job opportunities and lakhs of indirect jobs.
- It would **benefit vehicle-users** as well as farmers and entrepreneurs.
- It holds **great promise for efficient municipal solid waste management** and in tackling the problem of polluted urban air due to farm stubble-burning and carbon emissions.
- It will help **bring down dependency on crude oil imports** and in realising the Prime Minister's vision of enhancing farmers' income, rural employment and entrepreneurship.

Compressed Bio-Gas (CBG)?

- Bio-gas is **produced naturally** (through a process of anaerobic decomposition) from waste / bio-mass sources like agriculture residue, cattle dung, sugarcane press mud, municipal solid waste, sewage treatment plant waste, etc.
- After purification, it is compressed and called CBG, which has **high methane content**.
- It is exactly **similar to the commercially available natural gas** in its composition and energy potential.
- It can be used as an **alternative, renewable automotive fuel** with similar calorific value and other properties similar to CNG.

Benefits of Compressed Bio-Gas (CBG)

- Responsible waste management, reduction in carbon emissions and pollution;
- Additional revenue source for farmers;
- Boost to entrepreneurship, rural economy and employment;
- Support to national commitments in achieving climate change goals;
- Reduction in import of natural gas and crude oil; and
- Buffer against crude oil/gas price fluctuations

6.9 INDIA'S FIRST BIO-BANK FOR HEART FAILURE RESEARCH INAUGURATED AT SREE CHITRA TIRUNAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL SCIENCES AND TECHNOLOGY

Recently, the Ministry of Science & Technology has launched the **National Heart Failure Biobank (NHFB)**.

National Heart Failure Biobank (NHFB)

- It is **India's first** National Heart Failure Biobank (NHFB).
- It would **collect blood, biopsies, and clinical data** as a guide to future therapies.
 - The biosamples include the **blood, serum, tissue samples obtained during open-heart surgery** and peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) and genomic DNA collected from heart failure patients.
- It was inaugurated at the **Sree Chitra Tirunal Institute for Medical Sciences and Technology (SCTIMST)**.
- The biobank activity is **supervised by a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)** with a member from **ICMR**.

Significance of National Heart Failure Biobank (NHFB)

- It would greatly **help in guiding future therapies and technologies** and would benefit the heart failure patients significantly.
- It will provide **insights into heart diseases and heart failure** among Indian children and adults, which are very different from that seen in the West.
- It would prove very **helpful in understanding molecular pathways** and would improve the diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment of Heart Failure.

- It will open a new era in **research in Heart Failure in India** and will change the persona of diagnosis and treatment of heart failure patients.
- Through the NHFB, **researchers can get access to well-annotated biological specimens** linked to clinical data while maintaining appropriate standards of quality and security.
- It will **facilitate research both in India and abroad**, helping clinicians and scientists to work together to understand and find solutions to heart failure-related morbidity and mortality.

6.10 INVASIVE INSECT FOUND IN RHODE ISLAND FOR 1ST TIME

Recently, the state environmental officials have found an **invasive insect in Rhode Island**.

Highlights

- It is a **single spotted lanternfly** was found in an area in Warwick near Jefferson Boulevard.
- It is an invasive insect that can **cause damage to native trees and agricultural crops**.
- There is **no known population of the insect** present in the state.
- It is **native to Asia** and feeds on agricultural crops such as **grapes, apples and hops as well as maple, walnut and willow trees**.
- The spotted lanternfly has black spots on its wings, scarlet underwings, yellow markings on its abdomen, and tan semi-transparent forewings.
- The insect was **first detected in the US in Pennsylvania in 2014** and has since spread to New Jersey, Maryland, Delaware, and Virginia with individual finds in New York, Connecticut and Massachusetts.
- It is most commonly associated with "**Tree of Heaven**" (*Ailanthus altissima*) plants.

6.11 THE DOCTOR-POPULATION RATIO IN INDIA IS 1:1456 AGAINST WHO RECOMMENDATION

Recently, the Ministry of Science & Technology has stated that India is well on the path towards **WHO recommended doctor to population ratio**.

WHO recommended Doctor to Population Ratio?

- The SDG agenda gives recognition to **Universal Health Coverage as key** to achieving all other health targets.

- The SDG 3c sets a target to **substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention** of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and Small Island developing States.
- WHO and its partners developed the **Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030 (GSHRH)** to accelerate progress towards UHC and the SDGs.

India and WHO recommended Doctor to Population Ratio

- The **doctor-population ratio in India is 1:1456** against the WHO recommendation of **1:1000**.
- India is well on the path to have **one doctor per thousand population by 2024**.
- India is **increasing the number of beds** from 11 lakh to 22 lakhs.
- At the time of Independence, the **average life was just 28 years**, and it has now reached close to 70 years.

Reasons for worst doctor to population ratio in India

- On an average, a **government doctor attends to 11,082 people**, more than 10 times than what the WHO recommends.
- The shortage of **government doctors does not augur well for India** where 70 per cent of health care expenses are met by **out-of-pocket expenditure**.
- **India is terribly short of government doctors:** India's health care sector is battling a major crisis i.e. inadequate infrastructure and human resource.
 - Over the last nine years, shortage of medical staff, especially doctors, claimed lives of 72,000 infants in government hospitals of Madhya Pradesh.
- **Rural India is bearing the maximum brunt:** The country had a shortfall of 10,112 female health workers at primary health centres, 11,712 female health assistants, 15,592 male health assistants and more than 61000 female health workers and auxiliary nurse mid-wives at sub-centres.
- **Shortage of other medical staff:** There are reportedly 462 medical colleges that churn out 56,748 doctors every year.
 - With India's population increasing by about 26 million each year, the increase in number of medical staff is too little.

Measures adopted by India to achieve Doctor to Population Ratio

- **Ayushman Bharat Yojana and Jan Arogya Yojana** are the programmes that focus on providing all kinds of health facilities to people and are steps towards universal health coverage, affordability and accessibility to health facilities.
- Under Jan Arogya Yojana, **50 Crore people are eligible now** for affordable health services.
- By the year 2022, **150,000 primary health care centres would be in place in rural as well as urban areas** of the country, and these centres would be hub for primary health care.
- The **maximum intake capacity at MBBS level has been increased** from 150 to 250, the norms for setting up of Medical Colleges in terms of requirement of land, faculty, staff bed strength etc have been rationalized.
- The Government has also **supported States to add nearly 2.51 lakh additional health human resources** including General Duty Medical Officers, Specialists, Staff Nurses, Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs), Paramedics, Public Health Managers and Programme Management staff on a contractual basis.

6.12 WHY AN 'OLYMPIAN' BAT'S 2,000-KM FLIGHT HAS INTRIGUED SCIENTISTS

Recently, a bat dubbed the “**Olympian bat**” by scientists is **piquing** the interest of climate scientists after she broke British records by flying more than **2,000 km from London to the Pskov region** in north-western Russia.

Olympian Bat

- It belongs to the **Nathusius' pipistrelle species** of bats.
 - The Nathusius' pipistrelle is **found across Europe from the U.K. to Asia Minor**.
- It was **discovered by a resident** of a small Russian village called Molgino, which is located in the **Pskov region of Russia**.
- The Bat Conservation Trust launched a project called the **National Nathusius' Pipistrelle Project** in 2014.
 - It aims to improve our **understanding of the ecology, status and conservation threats** for Nathusius' pipistrelles in Great Britain.
 - Its goal is to **determine the migratory origins of this species of bats** since they might help in understanding its links to climate change.

Significance of journey of Olympian Bat

- The journey is significant because it is the **longest one undertaken by a bat** from Britain across Europe.
- Its record is topped by another bat from the same species that flew from **Latvia to Spain in 2019 covering 2,224 km.**
- The journey is important for climate scientists as it gives them the **window to learn more about bat migration and how it relates to climate change.**
- Bat Conservation Trust UK believes that **Nathusius' pipstrelle's range of bats is linked to climate change** and that any climate changes in future will further impact this species.

6.13 TOBACCO USE AMONG SCHOOL GOING CHILDREN (13-15 YEARS) – HIGHEST IN ARUNACHAL PRADESH AND MIZORAM & LOWEST IN HIMACHAL PRADESH AND KARNATAKA

Recently, Union Minister for Health and Family Welfare today presided over the release of National Fact Sheet **Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS-4), India, 2019.**

Global Youth Tobacco Survey?

- It is a **self-administered, school-based survey of students** in grades associated with **13 to 15 years of age.**
- It is designed to **enhance the capacity of countries to monitor tobacco use among youth** and to guide the implementation and evaluation of tobacco prevention and control programmes.
- It is developed by **World Health Organization (WHO), the Tobacco Free Initiative (TFI), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** and the **Office on Smoking and Health at the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (OSH-CDC).**
- It uses a standard methodology for **constructing the sampling frame, selecting schools and classes, preparing questionnaires, following consistent field procedures,** and using consistent data management procedures for data processing and analysis.
- It is an important tool to **assist countries in supporting WHO MPOWER,** a package of six evidence-based demand reduction measures contained in the **WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).**

Highlights of Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS-4)-India

- It was conducted in 2019 by the **International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS)** under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW)**.
- The survey was designed to **produce national estimates of tobacco use among school going children aged 13-15 years** at the state level and Union Territory (UT) by sex, location of school (rural-urban), and management of school (public-private).
- The **first three rounds of GYTS** were conducted in 2003, 2006 and 2009.
- The **objective of the survey** was to provide information on tobacco use, cessation, second-hand smoke, access and availability, exposure to anti-tobacco information, awareness and receptivity to tobacco marketing, knowledge, and attitudes.

Key Findings of GYTS-4

- **Tobacco use**
 - Nearly **one-fifth of the students aged 13-15 used** any form of the tobacco product (smoking, smokeless, and any other form) in their life.
 - Prevalence of tobacco use among **boys was 9.6%** and among **girls was 7.4%**.
 - The prevalence of **smoking tobacco was 7.3%** and in case of **smokeless tobacco product, the prevalence was 4.1%**.
 - The current use of tobacco among students across the States/ UTs ranged from the **highest in Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram (58% each)** to the **lowest in Himachal Pradesh (1.1%) and Karnataka (1.2%)**.
- **Age of initiation of tobacco**
 - **38% of cigarette, 47% of bidi smokers and 52% of smokeless tobacco** users initiated the use **before their 10th birthday**.
 - The **median age at initiation of cigarette and bidi smoking, and smokeless tobacco use** were 11.5 years, 10.5 years and 9.9 years respectively.
- **Cessation**
 - **2 in 10 current smokers tried to quit smoking** in the past 12 months and another **2 in 10 students wanted to quit smoking now**.
 - **27% of current users of smokeless tobacco tried to quit** using in past 12 months and another **25% wanted to quit now**.
- **Second-hand smoke**
 - **29.5% of the students were exposed to second-hand smoke** (11.2% at home, 21.2% inside enclosed public places, 23.4 at outdoor public places).

- **Access & availability**
 - 69% of current cigarette smokers and 78% of current bidi smokers bought cigarettes/bidis from a store, paan shop, street vendor or vending machine.
 - Among the current smokers who bought cigarette/bidi, 45% of cigarette smokers and 47% of bidi smokers were not refused because of their age.
- **Media and anti-tobacco messages**
 - 52% of students noticed anti-tobacco messages in the mass media.
 - 18% of students noticed tobacco advertisements or promotions when visiting points of sale.
- **Knowledge & attitudes**
 - 71% of students thought other people's cigarette smoking is harmful to them.
 - 58% of students favoured ban on smoking inside enclosed public places.
- **School policy**
 - 85% of school heads were aware of COTPA, 2003.
 - 83% of schools were aware of the policy to display 'tobacco-free school' board.

Policies in place for Tobacco Control in India

- India became a party to the **WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)** in 2005.
- The primary national tobacco control law is the **Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 2003 (COTPA)**.
 - It granted certain authority to the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, who has since passed over 15 Notifications which amend, clarify and expand COTPA.
- **National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP):** It was launched in the year 2007-08 during the 11th Five-Year-Plan, with the aim to:
 - - create awareness about the harmful effects of tobacco consumption;
 - reduce the production and supply of tobacco products;
 - ensure effective implementation of the provisions under COTPA
 - help the people quit tobacco use; and
 - facilitate implementation of strategies for prevention and control of tobacco advocated by WHO Framework Convention of Tobacco Control

- The **National Tobacco Control Cell (NTCC)** at the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) is responsible for overall policy formulation, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the different activities envisaged under NTCP.

Road Ahead

- The Union Health Minister **emphasized the role of teachers as most crucial in creating awareness among children** and their parents about harm due to tobacco use and for shaping the attitude of children in this regard.
- It is important to **create awareness among children about harms due to tobacco use** and it will ensure better outcomes in terms of reduction in prevalence of tobacco use among children and consequently among adults.

6.14 Union Minister Dr Jitendra Singh says, Deep Ocean Mission to be implemented by Ministry of Earth Sciences at a total budget of Rs. 4077 Cr for 5 years during the period 2021-2026

Recently, the Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology has approved **Deep Ocean Mission (DOM)** to be implemented by Ministry of Earth Sciences.

- The Minister also said that **private institutions will be included for development of technologies** for this mission to explore the possibilities of mining, bio-diversity, energy, fresh water etc. in Deep Ocean.

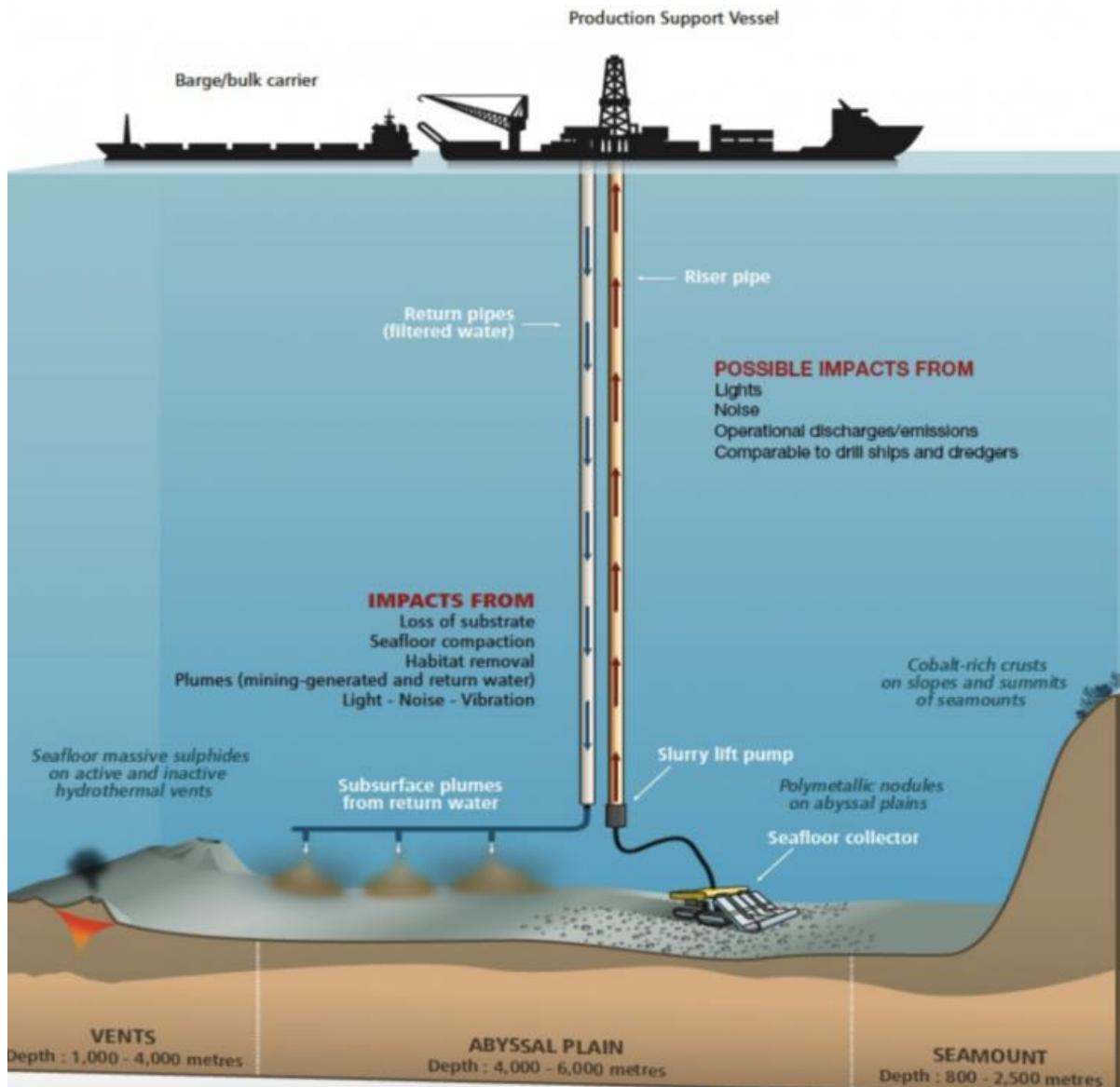
Deep Ocean Mission

- It is a **Rs 4,077-crore mission** that will be led by scientists at the **Ministry of Earth Sciences**.
- It is a **five-year** inter-ministerial and inter-departmental mission.
- The **five thrust areas** under the Deep Ocean Mission are:
 - Development of technologies for deep sea mining;
 - Manned submersible;
 - Development of ocean climate change advisory services;
 - Development of technology for exploration and conservation of deep-sea biodiversity; and
 - Deep ocean survey and setting up of a marine station for ocean Biology.

- Under the mission, **India will build a research vessel** specifically for carrying out deep ocean explorations and it will be built at an Indian shipyard.

Components of Deep Ocean Mission

- **Ocean climate change advisory services:** Under the mission, the government will work on development of models upon observations that will provide future projections of important climate variables.
 - This will be made from seasonal to decadal time scales and this particular component will be supporting the “Blue Economy priority area of coastal tourism.”
- **Technologies for deep sea mining, and manned submersible:** The component is focused on developing a manned submersible that will be able to carry three people to a depth of 6000 metres in the ocean.
 - Scientific sensors and tools can also be taken for an Integrated Mining System in order to conduct exploration services. Notably, there are only a few countries that have acquired this capability.
- **Conducting deep ocean survey and exploration:** The Indian government is trying to explore as well as identify potential sites that have multi-metal Hydrothermal Sulphides mineralization within the Indian Ocean mid-oceanic ridges.
- **Technological innovations for exploration and conservation of deep-sea biodiversity:** Under this component, the focus of the government will be “bioprospecting of deep sea flora and fauna” and also study how utilization of deep sea can be sustainable.
- **Energy and freshwater from the ocean:** For off-shore energy development, the aim under this component will be studying the detailed engineering design for offshore Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC).
- **Advanced marine station for ocean biology:** The marine stations will be formed to study ocean biology and engineering.
 - This component will translate research into industrial application and product development through on-site business incubator facilities.



Significance of Deep Ocean Mission

- It will bring **together researchers and experts** from the ISRO, DRDO, Department of Atomic Energy, CSIR, Department of Biotechnology and the Indian Navy.
- It will **make India one among the handful of powerful nations** that already have dedicated ocean studies and missions, including the US, Japan, France, Russia and China.

- It provides **impetus to India's Blue Economy initiatives** planned from 2020 to 2030 which envisages a number of researches that will be performed to study the oceans.
- It will help India **tighten its grip in the South Asia region** given India's long coastline of 7500km and flanked by sea on three sides.

Challenges in Deep Ocean Mission

- The technologies required for deep-sea mining have **strategic implications and are not commercially available**.
- The plan to allow **deep-sea mining has come under criticism from environmental organisations** that fear it might cause irreparable damage to the flora and fauna on ocean floor.
- Under the Deep Ocean Mission, there are plans to acquire a dedicated vessel for this exploration, which could **cost around Rs 900 crore, depending on the equipment**
- There are about 30 private and government contracts with the ISA for deep-sea exploration but **mining is not allowed because the international code for it has yet to be announced**.

6.15 EXPLAINED: THE TAKEAWAYS FROM GSLV-F10 FAILURE

Recently, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has suffered the **loss of an important earth observation satellite "EOS-03"** when the GSLV rocket carrying it malfunctioned.

Highlights

- The launch was supposed to **place EOS-03**, an earth observation satellite, into a **geostationary orbit**.
- The mission could not be accomplished as intended because the **Cryogenic Upper Stage ignition did not happen** due to technical anomaly.
- The **cryogenic upper stage has an indigenously developed cryogenic engine** fuelled by liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen at very low temperatures.
- The cryogenic stage is supposed to be much more efficient and **provides greater thrust to propel heavier rockets like GSLV** that are designed to carry bigger payloads into space.

Geo-imaging satellite "EOS-03"

- It is a **geo-imaging satellite** for Earth Observation from Geostationary Orbit.

- The technology is developed by the **Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO)** and it consists of capabilities including:
 - Imaging the whole country 4-5 times daily
 - In addition to natural disasters, EOS-03 would also enable monitoring of water bodies, crops, vegetation condition, forest cover changes etc.
- It would enable **near-real time monitoring of natural disasters** like floods & cyclones.

GSLV Mark III

- It is capable of **launching four-tonne satellites** in the **Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO)**.
- It is also capable of placing up to **eight tonnes in a Low Earth Orbit (LEO)**, enough to carry a manned module.
- It is **India's first fully functional rocket** to be tested with a cryogenic engine that uses liquid propellants i.e. liquid oxygen and liquid hydrogen.
- The 640-tonne rocket, **equal to the weight of 200 fully-grown Asian elephants**, is the country's heaviest but shortest rocket with a height of 43 metre.
- It is a three-stage vehicle with **two solid motor strap-ons (S200)**, a **liquid propellant core stage (L110)** and a **cryogenic stage (C-25)**.

6.16 INDIGAU: INDIA'S FIRST CATTLE GENOMIC CHIP LAUNCHED

Recently, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) Science & Technology has launched '**IndiGau**'.

IndiGau?

- It is **India's first Single Nucleotide Polymorphism (SNP) based chip** for the **conservation of pure varieties of indigenous cattle breeds** like Gir, Kankrej, Sahiwal, Ongole etc.
- It was developed by the concerted efforts of scientists of **National Institute of Animal Biotechnology (NAIB), Hyderabad**.
 - The NAIB is **autonomous institution** under the aegis of the Department of Biotechnology.
- It is **purely indigenous** and the **largest cattle chip** of the world.
- It has **11,496 markers (SNPs)** more than that placed on **777K Illumina chip of US & UK breeds**.

Significance of IndiGau

- It will have practical utility in the Governments schemes to **achieve the goal of conservation of our own breeds** with better characters.
- It will help towards **doubling of farmers' income** by 2022.
- The NIAB has entered into a collaborative agreement with the **National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)** to further the use of this chip in **generating phenotypic and genotypic correlations**.
- NIAB has also entered into an MoU with private industry to **generate capability within India for designing and making our own SNP chips**.

6.17 ADENOVIRAL INTRANASAL COVID-19 VACCINE

Recently, **Bharat Biotech's intranasal vaccine** has received regulatory approval for **Phase 2/3 trials**.

Adenoviral Intranasal COVID-19 Vaccine?

- It is the **first nasal vaccine** that has received the regulatory approval for Phase 2 trials.
- It is the **first of its kind COVID-19 jab** to undergo human clinical trials in India.
- **BBV154** is an **intranasal replication-deficient chimpanzee adenovirus SARS-CoV-2** vectored vaccine.
- Bharat Biotech International Limited (BBIL) has **in-licensed technology** from Washington University in St Louis, USA.
- The phase 1 clinical trial has been **completed for the 18-60 years age group**.

Benefits to an intranasal vaccine during a pandemic

- The intranasal vaccines aim to **overcome barriers to delivery and administration** that come with producing and distributing injectable vaccine.
- The intranasal vaccines are able to **tap an additional set of immune cells** found in the tissues lining the nose, mouth and lungs.
- Intranasal vaccines **cut down on the need for syringes, needles and other components** like alcohol swabs, as they are not injected.
- The vaccine was found to be **safe, immunogenic, and well tolerated** in pre-clinical toxicity studies.
- It was able to **elicit high level of neutralizing antibodies** in animal studies.

- An intranasal vaccine stimulates a broad immune response – **neutralizing IgG, mucosal IgA, and T cell responses.**

Potential setbacks of Intranasal Vaccines

- The past attempts to **develop intranasal vaccines**, including for measles flu, have not been very successful.
- The intranasal vaccines have **mostly been made using live, weakened viruses**, but have never cleared clinical trials.
- The experts have also said that, because such a vaccine is being administered through the nose, the **amount given in one shot has to be smaller than the quantity that can be delivered when injected.**

6.18 CSIR AROMA MISSION

Recently, the Ministry of Science & Technology has organized the Special Webinar on **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) Aroma Mission** on the eve of India's 75th Independence Day.

About CSIR Aroma Mission

- The nodal laboratory is **CSIR-Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CSIR-CIMAP)**, Lucknow
 - The **participating laboratories** are CSIR-Institute of Himalayan Bioresource Technology (CSIR-IHBT), Palampur; CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (CSIR-IIIM), Jammu; CSIR-National Botanical Research Institute (CSIR-NBRI), Lucknow; and CSIR-North-East Institute of Science and Technology (CSIR-NEIST), Jorhat.
- It is envisaged to **bring transformative change in the aroma sector** through desired interventions in the areas of agriculture, processing and product development for fuelling the growth of aroma industry.
- It will promote the **cultivation of aromatic crops for essential oils** that are in great demand by aroma industry.
- It will to **enable Indian farmers and aroma industry to become global leaders** in the production and export of some other essential oils on the pattern of menthol mint.

- Under the CSIR Aroma Mission, **important medicinal and aromatic plants are being cultivated** in 6,000 hectares of land.
- It will put a mechanism in place for **timely agro-advisory, ensuring optimal productivity and fair price of the produce** to the farmers and reducing the import of essential oils.

Objectives of CSIR Aroma Mission

- Bring about **5500 ha of additional area under captive cultivation aromatic cash crops** particularly targeting rain-fed /degraded land across the country
- Provide **technical and infrastructural support** for distillation and values-addition to farmers/growers all over the country
- Enabling **effective buy-back mechanisms** to assure remunerative prices to the farmers/growers
- **Value-addition to essential oils and aroma ingredients** for their integration in global trade and economy

Significance of CSIR Aroma Mission

- It has generated **rural employment of farmers, spurred entrepreneurship in aromatic oils** and other aromatic products manufacturing.
- The Mission has generated **10 to 12 lakh man-days of rural employment** and **more than 500 tonnes of essential oil** worth Rs.60 crores was produced during the last two years.
- It has **lowered the import of essential and aromatic oils**.
- The activities of the Mission will **improve availability of quality material on sustainable basis** for a boom in the herbal industry based on essential oils.

6.19 DEFENCE TESTING INFRASTRUCTURE SCHEME (DTIS)

Recently, the Ministry of Defence has launched the **Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme (DTIS)**.

About Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme (DTIS)

- It has been **launched with an outlay of Rs 400 crore** for creating **state-of-the-art testing infrastructure** in partnership with the private industry.
- It would run for the duration of five years and **envisages setting up of 6-8 Greenfield Defence Testing Infrastructure facilities** that are required for defence and aerospace related production.

- The projects under the scheme will be provided with up to **75 per cent Government funding** in the form of '**Grant-in-Aid**'.
- The remaining **25 per cent of the project cost will have to be borne by the Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)** constituents of which will be the Indian private entities and state governments.

Significance of Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme (DTIS)

- Its objective is to **promote indigenous defence production**, with special focus on participation of MSMEs and Start Ups by bridging gaps in defence testing infrastructure in the country.
- The setting up of Defence Testing Infrastructure will **provide easy access** and thus meet the **testing needs of the domestic defence industry**.
- It would provide financial assistance to private sector for setting up **Testing and Certification facilities for manufacturers of defence equipment/systems**.

Eligible entities under Defence Testing Infrastructure Scheme (DTIS)

- **Each DTI will be setup through a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV)**, hereinafter referred to as the Implementation Agency, which may be promoted/constituted by private entities (Industry, Industry association, R&D/Academic institution) and State Government agencies.
- The Implementation Agency under the Scheme shall be a **Section 8 company registered under the Companies Act, 2013**.
- **Only private entities registered in India and State Government agencies** will qualify for forming the Implementation Agency.
- The Central Government assistance for **setting up DTIs will be in the form of Grant-in-Aid** and will be limited to sum total of Rs 400 Cr. Assistance for individual DTI under the Scheme **shall not exceed 75%** of the project cost.
- All the constituents of **SPV (Implementation Agency) shall have positive net worth**.
- At least three constituents of the SPV should be in **existence for more than three years and no relaxation will be provided** in this regard.
- The SPV (Implementation Agency) shall be **responsible for obtaining statutory clearances** required for testing of weapons and ammunition.

6.20 SCIENTISTS DEVELOP NON-INVASIVE BIO-NANOCARRIER VISCERAL LEISHMANIASIS THERAPY

Recently, Indian researchers have developed a **non-invasive, easy to administer, cost-effective, and patient compliant** potential therapeutic strategy against **Visceral Leishmaniasis (VL)**.

Highlights

- The strategy based on **nano carrier-based oral drugs coated with Vitamin B12** enhanced oral bioavailability and efficacy of the therapy by more than 90%.
- The scientists have developed a **smart and intelligent nano-carrier utilizing the natural intrinsic Vitamin B12** pathway present in human body that can mitigate stability challenges and drug-associated toxicity.
- The INST team critically evaluated the **efficacy and properties of Vitamin B12 (VB12) coated solid lipid nano-particles** and their subsequent potential ramification in evading cytotoxicity and escalating stability.
- They conceptualized an **innate immune defence mechanism to enhance the physicochemical properties** of orally administered nanoparticles, which can easily navigate through the gastrointestinal tract without being washed away by naturally present mucus barrier.
- The research showed that **Vitamin B12 being an essential lifesaving micronutrient works as an innovative and beneficial supplement** for its treatment and prevention.
- It improves the **bioavailability and targeted delivery by utilizing the natural intrinsic Vitamin B12 pathway**, which is present in the human body and hence developing resistance for infection spread.

Visceral Leishmaniasis?

- Visceral Leishmaniasis, also known as **kala-azar**, is characterized by **irregular bouts of fever, substantial weight loss, swelling of the spleen and liver, and anaemia**.
- Leishmaniasis is caused by the **protozoan Leishmania parasites** which are transmitted by the bite of infected female phlebotomine sandflies.
- There are 3 main forms of leishmaniasis i.e. **visceral** (also known as kala-azar, which is and the most serious form of the disease), **cutaneous** (the most common), and **mucocutaneous**.

- Leishmaniasis is **linked to environmental changes** such as deforestation, building of dams, irrigation schemes, and urbanization.

Transmission of Visceral Leishmaniasis

- Leishmania parasites are **transmitted through the bites of infected female phlebotomine sandflies**, which feed on blood to produce eggs.
- The **epidemiology** of Leishmaniasis depends on:
 - The characteristics of the **parasite and sandfly species**;
 - The **local ecological characteristics** of the transmission sites;
 - **Current and past exposure** of the human population to the parasite; and
 - Human behaviour

India's position to fight Kala-azar

- Under the **National Health Mission (NHM), National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme** coordinates the kala-azar elimination programme in India.
- India has already **missed the kala-azar elimination target** thrice in the last decade.
- The initial deadline set by the **National Health Programme (now NHM) was 2010**, which was pushed to 2015 in the 12th Financial Plan Document.
- The **deadline was later extended twice to 2017**, and then to 2020.
- The **WHO target** to eliminate Kala Azar was **2017**.
- The target is to **reduce the incidence of the disease** to less than one case per 10,000 population at the sub-district level.

6.21 NUCLEAR FUSION AND THE RECENT BREAKTHROUGH

Recently, the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory in California announced that an experiment carried out in its **National Ignition Facility** has made a **breakthrough in nuclear fusion research**.

Nuclear Fusion?

- It is defined as the **combining of several small nuclei into one large nucleus** with the subsequent release of huge amounts of energy.

- It is a good choice as the **baseload energy in the future with many advantages**, such as inexhaustibility of resources, inherent safety, no long-lived radioactive wastes, and almost no CO₂ emissions.
- The process releases energy because the **total mass of the resulting single nucleus is less than the mass of the two original nuclei**.
- It is most easily achieved on Earth by **combining two isotopes of hydrogen i.e. deuterium and tritium**.
 - **Hydrogen** is the lightest of all the elements, being made up of a single proton and a electron.
 - **Deuterium** has an extra neutron in its nucleus; it can replace one of the hydrogen atoms in H₂O to make what is called “heavy water”.
 - **Tritium** has two extra neutrons, and is therefore three times as heavy as hydrogen.
- In a fusion cycle, **tritium and deuterium are combined and result in the formation of helium**, the next heaviest element in the Periodic Table, and the release of a free neutron.

Advantages of Nuclear Fusion

- It represents a **long-term, sustainable, economic and safe energy source** for electricity generation.
- The nuclear fusion **powers our sun** and harnessing this fusion energy could **provide an unlimited amount of renewable energy**.
- It **does not emit carbon dioxide or other greenhouse gases** into the atmosphere, and it could play a future climate change mitigating role as a low carbon energy source.
- Fusion fuel is **plentiful and easily accessible** i.e. deuterium can be extracted inexpensively from seawater, and tritium can be produced from naturally abundant lithium.
- The future fusion reactors will **not produce high activity, long lived nuclear waste, and a meltdown** at a fusion reactor is practically impossible.
- Fusion **does not employ fissile materials** like uranium and plutonium and there are no enriched materials in a fusion reactor like ITER that could be exploited to make nuclear weapons.
- The **power output of the kind of fusion reactor** that is envisaged for the second half of this century will be similar to that of a fission reactor.

Highlights

- The team used **new diagnostics, improved laser precision**, and even made changes to the design.

- The scientists applied **laser energy on fuel pellets to heat and pressurize them** at conditions similar to that at the centre of our Sun which triggered the fusion reactions.
- These reactions **released positively charged particles called alpha particles**, which in turn heated the surrounding plasma.
 - At high temperatures, **electrons are ripped from atom's nuclei and become plasma** or an ionised state of matter and plasma is also known as the fourth state of matter.
- The heated plasma also **released alpha particles** and a **self-sustaining reaction called ignition** took place.
- Ignition helps **amplify the energy output from the nuclear fusion reaction** and this could help provide clean energy for the future.

6.22 DRDO DEVELOPS ADVANCED CHAFF TECHNOLOGY FOR IAF JETS

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has developed an advanced chaff technology to safeguard Indian Air Force (IAF) fighter jets against hostile radar threats.

Advanced chaff technology?

- It is an **electronic countermeasure technology** used by militaries worldwide to protect their assets, like naval vessels and aircraft.
- It protects the assets from **radar and radio frequency**.
- **In case of naval ships**, chaff rockets are deployed in the air, which act as multiple targets for missile guidance system.
- Very less quantity of chaff material deployed in the air acts as decoy to deflect enemy's missiles for safety of the ships.
- The technology has been developed by DRDO's defense laboratory situated in **Jodhpur, Rajasthan** in collaboration with high energy materials research laboratory in Pune.
- The technology was developed in **three variants**.

Highlights

- Defense Laboratory earlier this year indigenously **developed three variants of chaff technology**:
 - Short Range Chaff Rocket (SRCR),

- Medium Range Chaff Rocket (MRCR) and
- Long-Range Chaff Rocket (LRCR).
- The Indian Navy conducted trials of all three variants in the Arabian Sea on Indian Naval Ship and found the performance satisfactory.

Difference between chaff and flares:

- Both are used to as **defensive countermeasure to confuse the radar** from detecting a vessel, or deflect the missiles from the target.
- While flares, when fired, generate a strong infrared source to attract heat-seeking missiles, **chaff is used to misguide radar-tracking weapons.**
- Chaff is **composed of many small aluminium or zinc coated fibres.** It will be stored on-board the aircraft as cartridges.

6.23 WORLD'S FIRST DNA BASED 'ZyCov-D'

Recently, the Subject Expert Committee (SEC) of **Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSO)** recommended an emergency use authorization (EUA) for Zydus Cadila's three-dose Covid-19 vaccine, **ZyCoV-D**.

ZyCov-D

- It is a **plasmid DNA vaccine** that produces the **spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2**.
- It elicits an immune response mediated by the **cellular (T lymphocytes immunity)** and **humoral (antibody-mediated immunity)** arms of the human immune system.
- It has shown the **efficacy of 66.6% against symptomatic Covid cases** and 100% for moderate disease.
- It is an **intra-dermal vaccine**, applied using a '**needle-free injector**'.
- It is the **only needle-free Covid vaccine** in the world.
- It is a **three-dose, intra-dermal vaccine**, which is applied using a **needle-free system, Tropis**, which can also lead to a significant reduction in any kind of side effects.
- It is delivered via a "**painless**" **intra-dermal applicator** and added that it plans to seek approval for a two-dose regimen of the vaccine.
- It has been developed in partnership with the department under **Mission COVID Suraksha**.
- It has been supported under the **Covid-19 Research Consortia** through **National Biopharma Mission** for preclinical studies.

Mission COVID Suraksha

- It is an **Indian COVID-19 Vaccine Development Mission** with end-to-end focus from preclinical development through clinical development and manufacturing and regulatory facilitation.
- Under the mission, the **grant will be provided to the Department of Biotechnology (DBT)** for Research & Development of Indian COVID-19 vaccines.
- It will help **accelerate development of approximately 5-6 vaccine candidates** and ensure that these are brought closer to licensure and introduction in market for consideration of regulatory authorities.
- The **important objectives** of the fund will be:
 - Accelerating pre-clinical & clinical development;
 - Licensure of COVID-19 vaccine candidates that are currently in clinical stages or ready to enter clinical stage of development, establishing clinical trial sites;

- Supporting development of common harmonized protocols, trainings, data management systems, regulatory submissions, internal and external quality management systems and accreditations;
- Strengthening the existing immunoassay laboratories, central laboratories; and
- Suitable facilities for animal studies, production facilities and other testing facilities to support COVID-19 vaccine development

6.24 Multi-Mode Hand Grenades (MMHG) is in the news?

Recently, the first batch of **Multi-Mode Hand Grenades (MMHG)** was handed over to the Indian Army in the presence of Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh in Nagpur, Maharashtra.

Genesis

- In October 2020, the **Ministry of Defence** signed a contract with **Nagpur-based private company Economic Explosives Limited**.
- The contract was signed to **supply 10 lakh Multi-Mode Hand Grenades** to the Indian Army at an approximate cost of Rs 409 crore.
- It is a **flagship project showcasing public-private partnership** under the aegis of Government of India.

Multi-Mode Hand Grenades (MMHG)

- It is manufactured by **Economic Explosives Limited Co** following **Transfer of Technology from a DRDO lab**.
- It has a **highly accurate delay time, very high reliability** in usage and safe for carriage.
- It will **replace Grenade No 36 of World War I vintage design**, which had been continuing in service till date.
 - The Grenade No 36 finds its origin in **Mills Bomb**, a popular name for a series of British Hand Grenade made by William Mills in 1915.
- It has a distinctive design that gives flexibility of employment in **both defensive (fragmentation) and offensive (stun) modes**.
- It has a **minimum shelf life of 15 years** from manufacturing under normal storage conditions, proving that it is stable and can be used for a long time.
- These grenades can be **fired from the rifle** too.

Significance of Multi-Mode Hand Grenades (MMHG)

- The grenade offers multiple advantages to soldiers in terms of **safety and penetration attack** as compared to the vintage hand grenades.
- It is an important milestone in defence manufacturing and a big step towards '**AatmaNirbhar Bharat**'.
- It is an example of **increasing collaboration between the public and private sectors** in defence manufacturing.
- It is the first instance of **ammunition being manufactured by the private industry** in India.

6.25 HAVANA SYNDROME

Recently, the US Vice-President Kamala Harris's trip to Hanoi in Vietnam was delayed due to a possible case of the "Havana Syndrome".

What is Havana Syndrome?

- Havana Syndrome is a **mysterious illness** that was first detected at the US Embassy in Havana, Cuba in 2016.
- In late 2016, US diplomats and other employees stationed in **Havana reported feeling ill after hearing strange sounds and experiencing** odd physical sensations in their hotel rooms or homes.
- From 2016 to 2017, diplomats and staff suddenly developed **surprising symptoms like hearing loss, dizziness, and other neurological issues**.

Symptoms of Havana Syndrome

- Most people who have had Havana Syndrome heard a **loud noise and felt an intense pressure or vibration in their head, dizziness, and pain in their ear or head**.
- The **neurologic symptoms** reported in Havana syndrome are commonly seen in concussions.
- The symptoms go away soon for some people, but others have **experienced chronic insomnia, headaches, and even brain damage**.

Cause of Havana Syndrome

- The NAS study does point out that the **Soviet Union researched the effects of pulsed radio frequency energy** more than 50 years ago.

- The committee felt that many of the **distinctive and acute signs, symptoms, and observations** reported by employees are consistent with the effects of directed, pulsed radio frequency energy.

What is Havana syndrome?

The medical mystery named for the Cuban city where U.S. diplomats first experienced sudden, debilitating symptoms in 2016 has been reported by Americans serving in several other countries.

Acute symptoms (often occurring suddenly) may include:

Loud sounds (sometimes described as chirping, clicking or screeching) and pain in one or both ears; many felt the sensations came from a particular direction or were felt when in a specific location

Tinnitus, hearing loss

Intense pressure or vibration inside the head

Difficulty with memory or concentration

Visual disturbances

Nausea

Unsteady gait, loss of balance, vertigo/dizziness

Chronic symptoms (can last weeks, months or longer) may include:

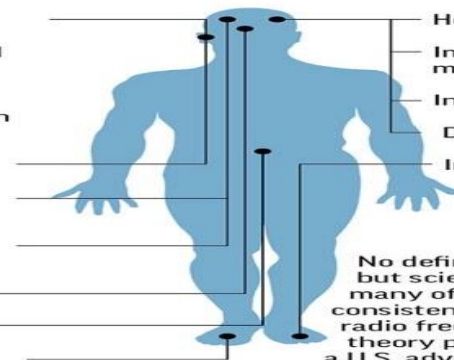
Headache

Impaired concentration, memory loss

Insomnia

Depression

Impaired balance



No definitive cause has been found, but scientific studies have noted many of the acute symptoms are consistent with exposure to directed radio frequency (RF) energy. One theory posits the use of RF energy by a U.S. adversary as a weapon or a tool of espionage.

Source: National Academy of Sciences

AP

Response of US to Havana Syndrome

- The US has come to believe there is a **“very strong possibility”** the syndrome is intentionally caused.
 - The **Federal Bureau of Investigation, CIA, US military, National Institutes of Health, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention** have investigated the incidents without coming out with anything conclusive.
- In December 2020, a report by the **National Academies of Sciences (NAS)** found **“directed energy beams”** as a **“plausible”** cause of the Havana Syndrome.
- The NAS report examined four possibilities to explain the symptoms i.e. **infection, chemicals, psychological factors** and **microwave energy**.
- The report concluded that **directed pulsed radio frequency (RF) energy appears to be the most plausible mechanism** in explaining these cases among those that the committee considered.
- The report warned about the **possibility of future episodes** and recommended that the State Department **establish a response mechanism** for similar incidents.

6.26 COVID-19: IS INDIA ENTERING ENDEMIC STAGE OF CORONAVIRUS?

Recently, the World Health Organisation Chief Scientist Dr Soumya Swaminathan has said that **COVID-19 may be entering a stage where it will become endemic.**

When does a disease become endemic?

- Endemic is derived from Greek **en meaning in** and **demos meaning people**.
 - It is used to describe a disease that is **present at an approximately constant level** within a society or country.
- According to the US Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), endemic refers to the **“constant presence and/or usual prevalence of a disease or infectious agent in a population within a geographic area”**.
- The experts have written that when **epidemics become endemic**, they become **“increasingly tolerated”** and the responsibility of protecting against it shifts from the government to the individual.
- An epidemic, on the other hand, refers to a scenario when the **number of cases of the disease increases**, often suddenly, which means the **cases are more than the expected levels**.

What is Endemicity?

- It refers to that a disease reaches an endemic stage when a **population learns to live with the conditions**.
- It means its **spread is limited to a particular area** and its rate is predictable.
- Unlike an epidemic, it **does not** overwhelm a population.

How pandemics or epidemics end up being endemic?

- Every disease pathogen that has affected people over the last several decades stayed in some form or other as it is **impossible to fully eradicate them**.
- **Pathogens like malaria that are as old as humanity still exert** a heavy disease burden and so are epidemics like tuberculosis, measles, leprosy, and **younger pathogens** like Ebola virus, MERS, SARS, and recent SARS-CoV-2.
 - **Even Plagues returned every decade**, each time hitting vulnerable societies and taking its toll during at least six centuries.

- The **only disease that has been eradicated** through relentless mass vaccination campaigns is **Smallpox**.

6.27 QSIM IS THE GATEWAY FOR INDIAN SCIENTISTS TO TAKE US IN DIRECTION OF FUTURE DEMANDS OF COMPUTING POWER

Recently, the Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology has launched **Quantum Computer Simulator (QSim) Toolkit**.

What is QSim?

- It's a **first-of-its-kind toolkit** to be indigenously developed and is intended to be a **vital tool in learning and understanding the practical aspects** of programming using Quantum Computers.
- It is an outcome of the project "**Design and Development of Quantum Computer Toolkit (Simulator, Workbench) and Capacity Building**".
- It is being executed collaboratively by **IISc Bangalore, IIT Roorkee and C-DAC** with the support of **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**.
- **Intuitive UI:** QSim offers a robust QC Simulator integrated with a GUI based Workbench allowing students / researchers to create Quantum programs, visualize the instant circuit generation and simulated outputs.
- **Simulate noisy Quantum logic circuits:** Helps simulate Quantum circuits with and without noise and test how well various algorithms work with imperfect quantum components. This is essential to simulate real-life conditions.
- **Pre-loaded Quantum algorithms and Examples:** QSim comes loaded with Quantum programs and algorithms providing a head start to the users. E.g. QFT, Deutsch Jozsa, Grover's and so on.
- **Integrated with HPC:** The quantum simulations are performed on powerful HPC resources allowing multiple users to submit jobs simultaneously with different Qubit configurations.

Offering Models of QSim

- **PARAM SHAVAK QSim** - Standalone system with Quantum Simulator in a box
- **PARAM QSim Cloud** - Available on cloud using HPC infrastructure PARAM SIDDHI AI (developed and deployed under NSM program)

Significance of QSim

- It aims to enable Researchers and Students to **carryout research in Quantum Computing** in a cost effective manner.
- It is one of the first initiatives in the country to **address the common challenge of advancing the Quantum Computing research frontiers** in India.
- It allows researchers and students to **write and debug Quantum Code** that is essential for developing Quantum Algorithms.
- It allows researchers to **explore Quantum Algorithms under idealized conditions** and help prepare experiments to run on actual Quantum Hardware.
- It can serve as an **important educational / research tool providing an excellent way** to attract students / researchers to the field of Quantum Technology.
- It provides a platform to **acquire the skills of 'programming'** as well as 'designing' real Quantum Hardware.

6.28 WHAT IS WEST NILE VIRUS? RUSSIA WARNS OF INCREASE IN CASES

Recently, Russia has warned of a possible increase in **West Nile Virus (WNV) infections** this autumn as mild temperatures and heavy precipitation create favourable conditions for the mosquitos that carry it.

West Nile Virus (WNV)?

- It is an **infectious disease** spread by infected mosquitoes.
- It **spreads from birds to humans** with the bite of an **infected Culex mosquito**.
- It can lead to a **fatal neurological disease** in humans.
- The virus causes West Nile fever in around **20 per cent of cases**, according to World Health Organization (WHO).
- It is related to the **Zika, dengue and yellow fever viruses**.

Symptoms of West Nile Virus (WNV)

- People who get WNV usually have **no symptoms or mild symptoms**.
- The symptoms include a **fever, headache, body aches, skin rash, and swollen lymph glands**.
- They can **last a few days to several weeks**, and usually go away on their own.

Origin of West Nile Virus (WNV)

- According to WHO, WNV was **first isolated in a woman** in the **West Nile district of Uganda** in 1937.
- It was **identified in birds (crows and columbiformes)** in Nile delta region in 1953.
- Before 1997, WNV was not considered pathogenic for birds, but at that time in Israel a more **virulent strain caused the death of different bird species** presenting signs of encephalitis and paralysis.
- **Human infections attributable to WNV** have been reported in many countries for over 50 years.

Impact of West Nile Virus (WNV)

- If West Nile virus **enters the brain**, it can be life-threatening.
- It may cause **inflammation of the brain, called encephalitis**, or **inflammation of the tissue** that surrounds the brain and spinal cord, called meningitis.

Treatment of West Nile Virus (WNV)

- There are **no specific vaccines or treatments** for human WNV disease.
- The best way to avoid WNV is to **prevent mosquito bites**.
- The treatment is **supportive for patients with neuro-invasive West Nile virus**, often involving hospitalization, intravenous fluids, respiratory support, and prevention of secondary infections.
- Scientists have said that **milder temperatures attributed to climate change** could cause diseases such as the WNV to become more widespread.

7.1 HOW CREAMY LAYER AMONG OBCS IS DETERMINED, WHY IS ITS REVISION STUCK

Recently, a proposal to revise the criteria for defining the “**creamy layer**” among OBCs has been pending for years, and MPs have raised the issue during the ongoing Monsoon Session of Parliament.

Creamy Layer?

- It is a concept that sets a **threshold within which OBC reservation benefits** are applicable.

- While there is a **27% quota for OBCs in government jobs and higher educational institutions**, those falling within the “creamy layer” cannot get the benefits of this quota.
- Based on the recommendation of the **Second Backward Classes Commission (Mandal Commission)**, the government 1990 had notified 27% reservation for **Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBCs)** in vacancies in civil posts and services that are to be filled on direct recruitment.
- In 1992, the **Supreme Court (Indira Sawhney case)** upheld 27% reservation for OBCs, subject to exclusion of the creamy layer.

Determination of Creamy Layer

- An expert committee headed by **Justice (retired) R N Prasad** was constituted for fixing the criteria for determining the creamy layer.
- In 1993, the **Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)** listed out various categories of people of certain rank/status/income whose children cannot avail benefit of OBC reservation.
- The current threshold is an **income of Rs 8 lakh per year** for those not in government.
- For children of government employees, the threshold is based on their **parents’ rank and not income**.
- The **income from salaries or agriculture land** is not clubbed while determining the creamy layer.

Constitutional Provisions related to Reservations

- **Article 14** of the Constitution guarantees equality before law and equal protection of laws to everyone.
- **Articles 16(1) and 16(2)** assure citizens equality of opportunity in employment or appointment to any government office.
- **Article 15(1)** generally prohibits any discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, caste, sex or place of birth.
- **Articles 15(4) and 16(4)** state that these equality provisions do not prevent the government from making special provisions in matters of admission to educational institutions or jobs in favour of backward classes, particularly the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs).
- The **Articles 16 (4) and 16 (4-A)** empower the State to make reservation in matters of appointment and promotion in favour of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes only “if in the opinion of the State they are not adequately represented in the services of the State”.

- **Article 29(2)** bars discrimination against any citizen with regard to admission to educational institutions maintained by the government or receiving aid out of government funds on grounds of religion, race, caste etc.

7.2 INITIATIVES ENSURING SAFETY IN ONLINE EDUCATION

Recently, the Union Minister of Education has provided information regarding the **initiatives of government in ensuring safety in online education.**

Highlights

Cyber Security Handbook

- It is launched by **Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)**.
- It aims to **ensure safe and healthy digital habits** among students.
- It covers topics in cyber safety, such as **cyber bullying, including social exclusion, intimidation, defamation, and emotional harassment, online sexual abuse, cyber radicalisation, online attack and frauds, and online enticement.**
- It will introduce students to the nine elements of digital citizenship i.e. **digital access, literacy, communication, etiquette, health and wellbeing, rights, freedom and responsibility, security and law.**

CERT-In Guidelines

- It has been prepared by **Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In)** under Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology.
- CERT-In is the **national nodal agency** for responding to computer security incidents.

PRAGYATA guidelines

- The guidelines include **eight steps of online/ digital learning** i.e. **Plan-Review-Arrange-Guide-Yak (talk)-Assign-Track-Appreciate.**
- The guidelines **outlines suggestions** for administrators, school heads, teachers, parents and students on the following areas:
 - Need assessment

- Concerns while planning online and digital education like duration, screen time, inclusiveness, balanced online and offline activities etc.
- Modalities of intervention including resource curation, level wise delivery etc.
- Physical, mental health and wellbeing during digital education
- Cyber safety and ethical practices including precautions and measures for maintaining cyber safety
- Collaboration and convergence with various initiatives
- These guidelines for school heads and teachers describe the **need assessment, planning and steps to implement digital education** while ensuring cyber safety and privacy measures.
- Its main emphasis is on **balanced online and offline activities keeping the screen time as an essential parameter** in accordance with the level of students.
- The initiative includes **DIKSHA, SWAYAM Prabha, SWAYAM MOOCS, Radio Vahini, Shiksha Vaani, Special content for children with special needs and ITPAL.**

7.3 GOVERNORS CAN PARDON PRISONERS, INCLUDING DEATH ROW ONES: SUPREME COURT

Recently, the Supreme Court has observed that the **power of Governor under Article 161 of the Constitution** to commute sentence or to pardon will override the restrictions imposed under Section 433-A of the Criminal Procedure Code.

Highlights

- The Governor has a **power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites and remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence** of any person if the **prisoner has not undergone 14 years or more** of actual imprisonment.
- The court held that the **power conferred on the Governor**, though exercised on the aid and advice of the State, is **without any restriction of the actual period of imprisonment** undergone by the prisoner.
- The court said that the remission under Article 161 of the Constitution **will override** Section 433-A of the Code.
- The policies of the State Government are composite policies **encompassing both situations** under Article 161 of the Constitution and Sections 432, 433 and 433-A of the Code.
- The remission under Article 161 of the Constitution will override Section 433-A of the Code, **if the State Government decides to be governed of its constitutional power.**

- The court noted that a **prisoner has to undergo a minimum period of imprisonment of 14 years without remission** in the case of an offence.
 - It implies that the **conviction of which carries death sentence, to take benefit of policy of remission** framed by an appropriate government under Section 432 of the Code in view of the overriding provision of Section 433-A of the Code.
- The court also observed that the **policy prevalent at the time of conviction** shall be taken into consideration for considering the premature release of a prisoner.
- The bench said that the **cases of the prisoners who have completed 14 years of actual imprisonment** can be decided by the State Government in terms of Sections 432 and 433 of the Code unless the State Government chooses to seek the approval of the Governor.

Pardoning Powers of the Governor

- Under Article 161, the **Governor too has pardoning powers**, but these **do not extend** to death sentences.
- The Governor of a State shall have the **power to grant pardons, reprieves, respites or remissions of punishment or to suspend, remit or commute the sentence of any person** convicted of any offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the State extends.

Pardoning Power of President of India

- The Constitution of India provides the **provisions of pardoning power of the president under Article 72**.
- The **President cannot exercise his power of pardon independent of the government** because the Rashtrapati Bhawan forwards the mercy plea to the Home Ministry, seeking the Cabinet's advice.
 - The Ministry in turn **forwards the plea to the concerned state government** and based on the reply, it formulates its advice on behalf of the Council of Ministers.
- Under Article 74(1), the **President can resend the advice for reconsideration given by the cabinet** and if the Council of Ministers decides against any change, the President has no option but to accept it.

Difference between Pardoning Power of the President and Governor

- The scope of the **pardoning power of the President under Article 72 is wider** than the pardoning power of the Governor under Article 161.
- The power differs in the following two ways:
 - The **power of the President to grant pardon extends** in cases where the punishment or sentence is by a **Court Martial** but Article 161 does not provide any such power to the Governor.
- The **President can grant pardon in all cases where the sentence given is sentence of death** but pardoning power of Governor does not extend to death sentence cases.

7.4 NATIONAL MOBILE MONITORING SOFTWARE (NMMS) APP

Recently, the Union Minister of Rural Development has informed about the benefits of the **National Mobile Monitoring Software (NMMS) App**.

National Mobile Monitoring Software (NMMS) App?

- It is an application of the **Ministry of Rural Development**.
- It is aimed at **bringing more transparency** and ensures proper monitoring of the schemes.
- It permits taking **real time attendance of workers at Mahatma Gandhi NREGA worksites** along with geo-tagged photograph.
- It helps in **increasing citizen oversight** of the programme.
- It is **applicable** for the Mahatma Gandhi NREGA workers for **all the States/ Union Territories**.

Need for NMMS App

- It underlined the importance of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA in **providing alternative employment to the rural people**, especially during COVID-19 pandemic.
- The government had **enhanced the outlay of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA** for the year 2020-21 from Rs. 61,500 crore to 1.11 lakh crore for ensuring all needy households get work under the Scheme as per their need.
- The Ministry is **making 99% wage payment directly into the bank account** of Mahatma Gandhi NREGA workers by way of DBT through NeFMS.
- The Ministry opined that the **successful implementation of Geo-MGNREGA**, a provision for geo-tagging of assets, has helped in refuting the charge of ghost assets being financed through the Scheme.

7.5 NO CASTE CENSUS OTHER THAN SCs, STs: GOVT

Recently, the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs has said in response to a question in Lok Sabha, "**The Government of India has decided as a matter of policy not to enumerate caste-wise population other than SCs and STs in Census**".

Genesis of Census in India

- **1830:** The first complete census of India was conducted in 1830 by Henry Walter in Dacca (now Dhaka) in which the statistics of the population with sex, broad age group, and the houses with their amenities were collected.
- **1836-37:** The second Census was conducted in 1836-37 by Fort St.George according to the government website of Census India.
- **1881:** The first synchronous census was taken under British rule in 1881, by W.C. Plowden, Census Commissioner of India.
 - In this census, the main emphasis was not only laid on complete coverage but also on the classification of demographic, economic and social characteristic took in the entire continent of British India (except Kashmir).
- In Independent India, too, **political disturbances led to the exclusion of Assam from the 1981 census** and Jammu and Kashmir from the 1991 census.
- The census in independent India is a **part of the Ministry of Home Affairs unlike British Census being controlled by an independent statistical authority** answerable to the British Parliament directly.

Caste Data in Census

- Every Census in independent India from 1951 to 2011 has **published data on Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes**, but not on other castes.
- The census until **1931 had data on caste** but in 1941, **caste-based data was collected but not published**.
- There is **no proper estimate for the population of OBCs**, various groups within the OBCs, and others.

- The Mandal Commission estimated the OBC population at 52%, some other estimates have been based on **National Sample Survey data**, and political parties make their own estimates in states and Lok Sabha and Assembly seats during elections.

Demand of Caste-based Census

- **Basis for reviewing the country's progress in the past decade:** It provides comprehensive and detailed data on the whole population in addition to demographic, social and economic characteristics by the lowest administrative or geographical level and related rates and indicators.
- **Monitoring the ongoing schemes of government & plan for future:** The census deeply reflects the social and economic changes and also the influences of the political processes.
 - Its role has changed from an instrument of governance to an instrument in development planning.
- **Proper assessment of population status:** It provides necessary data enabling the assessment of the population status in India during the inter-census period.
 - It aims to monitor demographic, social and economic changes taking place during the same period in various administrative divisions.
- **Use of Census Data in Business:** The census data are used by business to determine where to start or expand a business and to determine potential customers for new products.
- **Use of Census Data in Civil Rights Protection:** In addition to heavy use of Decennial Census data in the context of redistricting and voting rights, data from the Census are used to examine equality in jobs and education opportunities.

Need for OBC Count in Census

- The NCBC was **granted constitutional status in 2018**.
- The government has constituted a commission under chairmanship of former **Chief Justice of Delhi High Court Justice G Rohini** to sub-categorise OBCs.
- The Rohini Commission is **facing difficulties due to unavailability of data on various communities** classified under OBCs.
- The panel had written to Social Justice and Empowerment Minister and requested for **appropriate Budget provision for a proposed all-India survey for an estimate of caste-wise population of OBCs**.

- The parliamentary standing committee on welfare of OBCs has recommended that a headcount of OBCs be conducted in the upcoming census.

Caste never made it to the census?

- There have been concerns because the **last time a comprehensive data on caste was collected in India was way back in 1931.**
- The category of '**Race, Caste or Tribe**' was replaced by the '**Scheduled Tribe/ Scheduled Caste**' after India got independence.
- There is **little documentation about the discussion or debate** that had transpired between leaders of the time on what the census would include.
- The leaders attributed that this shift to the belief that "**including caste data in census enumeration will perpetuate the caste system and deepen social divisions**".
- The recording of caste was **abandoned after Indian Independence in 1947** in order to help smooth the growth of a secular state.
- The leaders had wanted to **drop the question of caste as it was thought of as a British policy** to divide and rule.
- The British wanted to **understand and control India through their understanding** of religion and caste.
- The issue of the **caste census has always been a politically-charged** one because of its implications on the percentage of reservation in education and jobs.

7.6 PREVENTIVE DETENTION ONLY IF DETENU AFFECTS OR LIKELY TO AFFECT PUBLIC ORDER, SC RULES

Recently, the Supreme Court has **quashed the detention of a man (a habitual fraudster)** under the Telangana Prevention of Dangerous Activities Act, 1986.

Preventive Detention?

- **Under Section 151 of The Criminal Procedure Code, 1973 (CrPC)** preventive detention is **action taken on grounds of suspicion** that some wrong actions may be done by the person concerned.
- A police officer can **arrest an individual without orders from a Magistrate** and without any warrant if he gets any information that such an individual can commit any offense.

- **Article 22 of the Indian Constitution** provides protection against arrest and detention in certain cases.

Constitutional Legitimacy of Preventive Detention

- The Article 22 of the Indian Constitution provides **safeguards against the misuse of police powers** to make arrests and detentions.
- The **clause(2) of Article 22 reads that every person** who is arrested and detained in custody shall be:
 - **Produced before the nearest magistrate within a period of twenty four hours** of such arrest excluding the time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to the court of the magistrate; and
 - **No such person shall be detained in custody beyond the said period** without the authority of a magistrate
- The clause (4) of the article states that **no individual can be detained for more than 3 months** unless a bench of High court judges or an Advisory board decides to extend the date.
 - An Advisory Board consisting of persons who are, or **have been, or are qualified to be appointed as, Judges of a High Court** has reported before the expiration of the said period of three months that there is in its opinion sufficient cause for such detention.
- The clause(5) of the Article 22 states that the **detained individual should be made aware of the grounds he/she has been detained** (in pursuance of the order) and should provide him/her with an opportunity of making a representation against the case.
- **Under Entry 9 of List I (Union List)**, Parliament has the exclusive power to enact a law for preventive detention for the reasons connected with defence, foreign affairs, or security of India.
- **Under Entry 3 of List III (Concurrent List)**, both Parliament and State Legislature have powers to enact such laws for the reasons related to maintenance of public order or maintenance of supplies or services essential to the community.

Preventive Detention Laws in India

- In the pre-independence era, the **British government enacted several laws providing for preventive detention**, such as the **Defence of the Realm Act, 1914** and the **Emergency Powers (Defence) Act, 1939**.

- The emergency legislations were replaced by regular legislation, such as the **Anarchical and Revolutionary Crimes Act, 1919 (better known as the 'Rowlatt Act')** and the **Bengal Criminal Law Amendment Act, 1930**, both of which were notoriously unpopular.
- India got its first preventive detention law, **the Preventive Detention Act, 1950 (PDA)** which was initially effective for one year, but was allowed to continue till 1969.
- The **Maintenance of Internal Security Act, 1971 (MISA)** is infamous for its use during the Emergency period in the 1970s to arrest opposition party leaders and remained effective till 1978.
- The **National Security Act, 1980 (NSA)** was enacted which continues to be effective to date.

Difference between preventive detention and an arrest?

- An **'arrest' is done** when a person is charged with a crime.
 - An arrested person is produced before a magistrate within the next 24 hours.
- In case of preventive detention, **a person is detained as he/she is simply restricted from doing something** that might deteriorate the law and order situation.

Supreme Court Judgment on Preventive Detention

- The bench of Justices has said that a **liberal meaning cannot be given to the expression public order** in the context of preventive detention statute.
- The court said that it must **ensure that the facts brought before it directly and inevitably lead to a harm, danger or alarm or feeling of insecurity** among the general public or any section thereof at large.
- The bench highlighted that the **charges of cheating against the detenu fall** in the realm of law and order.
- It said that a **preventive detention order can only be passed if the activities of the detenu or detainee affects**, or are likely to adversely affect, the maintenance of public order.

7.7 183 PROJECT PROPOSALS HAVE BEEN APPROVED ACROSS 29 STATES/UTS UNDER START-UP VILLAGE ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAMME (SVEP)

Recently, the Union Minister of State for Rural Development has informed that as on 30th June, 2021, **183 project proposals have been approved across 29 States/Union Territories** across the country under **Start-Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP)**.

Start-Up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP)

- It is a sub-scheme under **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM)**.
- It is a **flagship rural livelihood mission** of Ministry of Rural Development.
- It was **approved during 2015-16** and the **enterprise formation started in 2017-18**.
- The NRLM SHG's and federations are a **critical pre-requisite for the implementation** of the SVEP project.

Key Elements of SVEP

- Create a **Block Resource Centre – Enterprise Promotion (BRC-EP)**; The BRC should act as a nodal centre to implement SVEP. Block Level Federation (BLF) to come up under NRLM could be one of institutional platforms for BRC.
- **Cluster Level Federation (CLF) /VOs** shall hold the entity till BLF comes into existence. BRC should follow a self-sustaining revenue model.
- BRC is to be **assisted by CRP-EP and the Bank Coordination System (Bank Mitra)**. BRC is to provide resource and reference material including videos, manuals etc.
- Help enterprises **get bank finance using tablet based software** for making the business feasibility plan, doing credit appraisal and tracking business performance.
- Use the **Community Investment Fund (CIF)** to provide seed capital for starting the business till it reaches a size where bank finance is needed.

Objectives of SVEP

- **Develop local resources** by training a pool of village level community cadre (CRP EP) and build the capacity of the NRLM and SHG federations to monitor and direct the work of the CRP-EPs.
- **Help the rural entrepreneurs** to access finance for starting their enterprises from the NRLM SHG and federations, the banking systems including the proposed MUDRA bank.
- **Handhold the rural entrepreneurs/ enterprises** in the initial six months of start-up, with visits from the CRP-EP's supported by guidance from an advisory panel of experts for the relevant enterprise.

- **To enable rural poor to set up their enterprises**, in its proof of concept phase, by developing a sustainable model for Village Entrepreneurship promotion through integrated ICT techniques and tools for training and capacity building

Significance of SVEP

- It focuses on **providing self-employment opportunities** with financial assistance and training in business management and soft skills.
- It provides **skill building support to all the entrepreneurs** through Community Resource Persons for Enterprise Promotion (CRP-EP).
- It has the objective of **helping rural households** including women to set-up enterprises.
- The **long term vision of the SVEP** is to provide support for start-up to 1 crore village enterprises and provide direct employment to 2 crore people.

It mandates the **preparation of a Detailed Project Report (DPR)** for each block which provides estimates of the potential of enterprises in various sectors in the block.

7.8 OVER 58,000 RESCUED IN 2020-21 FROM CHILD LABOUR

Recently, the Minister of State for Labour and Employment has stated that in 2020-21 **over 58,000 children were rescued across India** from work, rehabilitated and mainstreamed under the **National Child Labour Project**.

STATE	2019-20	2020-21
MP	4,010	29,179
UP	10,371	9,383
W Bengal	13,879	6,671
Assam	6,175	2,800
Maharashtra	9,337	2,031
All India	54,894	58,289

National Child Labour Project (NCLP)?

- It is a **central sector scheme** where 100% of the funding is provided by the Government of India through the **Ministry of Labour and Employment**.

- Under this Scheme, the **District Project Societies (DPS)** are set up at the district level under the Chairmanship of the Collector/District Magistrate for overseeing the implementation of the project.
- It **withdraws the children in the age group of 9-14 years** from work and put into NCLP Special Training Centres.
 - They are provided with **bridge education, vocational training, mid-day meal, stipend, health care etc.** before being mainstreamed into formal education system.
- Under NCLP, the **funds are provided directly to the District Project Societies** who in turn engage and allocate the funds to NGOs/Voluntary Agencies/Civil Societies Organisation etc. for running of Special Training Centres.

Objectives of NCLP

- To **eliminate all forms of child labour** through
 - Identification and withdrawal of all children in the Project Area from child labour
 - Preparing children **withdrawn from work** for mainstream **education along with vocational training**
 - Ensuring convergence of services provided by different government departments/agencies for the benefit of child and their family
- To **contribute to the withdrawal of all adolescent workers** from Hazardous Occupations / Processes and their skilling and integration in appropriate occupations through:
 - Identification and withdrawal of all adolescent workers from hazardous occupations / processes
 - Facilitating vocational training opportunities for such adolescents through existing scheme of skill developments
- **Raising awareness amongst stakeholders and target communities**, and orientation of NCLP and other functionaries on the issues of 'child labour' and 'employment of adolescent workers in hazardous occupations/processes'; and
- Creation of a **Child Labour Monitoring, Tracking and Reporting System**.

Focus area of NCLP

- All child workers **below the age of 14 years** in the identified target area
- Adolescent workers **below the age of 18 years in the target area** engaged in hazardous occupations / processes

- **Families of Child workers** in the identified target area

Significance of NCLP

- A dedicated online portal named **PENCiL (Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labour)** is developed in order to make the NCLP successful through better monitoring and implementation.
- Its aim is to create an **enabling environment in the target area, where children are motivated and empowered** through various measures to enroll in schools and refrain from working.
- It will be implemented in **close coordination with State, District Administration and Civil Society.**
- It aims to contribute to the **identification and withdrawal of adolescents from hazardous occupations and processes** in the target area.
- It promotes **better informed communities, specific target groups** and the public at large as a result of the Social Mobilization Programme(s) and Awareness about the ill effects of child labour.

7.9 CENTRE NOD TO CONTINUATION OF SCHEME FOR SPL COURTS FOR RAPE, POCSO CASES

The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister has approved the **continuation of 1023 Fast Track Special Court (FTSCs)** including 389 exclusive POCSO Courts as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) from **2021 to 31st March 2023.**

Highlights of the development:

- The scheme will be continued with an outlay of **Rs. 1572.86 crore** (Rs.971.70 crore as Central Share and Rs.601.16 crore as State share) has been kept for the FTSCs.
- Central Share is to be funded from **Nirbhaya Fund.**
- The Scheme was launched on **September 2019.**

Fast Track Courts:

- Fast-track courts are **courts that have been set up to operate at a pace quicker than the rest of the judicial system.**
- It usually resolves crimes of a grave nature or long-standing issues.

- They are officially known as **Fast-Track Special Courts (FTSCs)** or simply Fast Track Courts (FTCs) in the Indian context.
- The FTCs are established to bring more stringent provisions and expeditious trial and disposal of sexual offence cases.
 - The central government enacted the **Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018** and made provision of stringent punishment, including **death penalty for perpetrators of rape**.
- They have a **better clearance rate** as compared to the regular courts and **hold speedy trials**.
- Besides providing quick justice to hapless victims, they **strengthen the deterrence framework for sexual offenders**.
- The primary responsibility and power for establishing FTSCs lie with the **state governments**.
- It currently covers **28 states**.
- The expected outcomes of the FTCs are as follows:
 - Further the commitment of the Nation to champion the cause of safety and security of women and girl child.
 - Reduce the number of pending cases of Rape & POCSO Act.
 - Provide speedy access to justice to the victims of sexual crimes and act as a deterrent for sexual offenders.
 - Fastracking of these cases will declog the judicial system of the burden of case pendency
- Fast-track courts were first proposed by the **11th Finance Commission**.

Advantages of fast-track courts:

1. **De-clog the judicial system:** The fast-track courts, at least in theory, can assist in declogging the Indian judicial system.
2. **Deliver justice for undertrials:** Undertrials—people who are arrested or detained and awaiting their trial to begin—in India can often spend years before they get their day in court. The fast-track courts help resolve that dilemma.
3. **Deliver justice for victims:** The fast-track special courts help in delivering justice and bringing closure to victims and victims' families.

Disadvantages of fast-track courts:

1. **Logistical issues:** These logistical issues often delay the FTCs, especially in rural areas, and these courts end up taking a longer time than necessary to dispose of cases.

- Gaps in technology that prevented the courts from hearing from victims.
- Shortages of staff and judges.
- Samples from forensic labs are also reportedly delayed.

2. Problems of prioritization: Another flaw with FTCs is deciding which cases to prioritize—and consequently, assign for fast-tracking. This requires difficult decisions and, oftentimes, the answers are based on political machinations and emotions.

3. Quick (in)justice: With the overwhelming time pressure and media focus on high-profile fast-tracked cases, judges could feel the pressure to ignore certain contentious points in a bid to hasten the process.

7.10 50% FUNDS ALLOTTED FOR ONGOING MPLADS PROJECTS LAPSE

Half of a belated ₹2,200 crore allotted for completing ongoing Members of Parliament Local Area Development Division (MPLADS) projects in 2020-21 has lapsed.

- The lapse occurred as the Finance Ministry granted “barely a week” to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) to release the funds.
- The scheme had been suspended for two years to divert the funds for managing the COVID-19 pandemic.

MPLADS:

- The MPLADS scheme was formulated in **1993**.
- Under the scheme, **each MP has the choice to suggest to the District Collector for works to the tune of Rs.5 Crores per annum to be taken up in his/her constituency.**
- The Rajya Sabha Members of Parliament can recommend works in one or more districts in the State from where he/she has been elected.
- The Nominated Members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha may select any one or more Districts from any one State in the Country for implementation of their choice of work under the scheme.
- **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI)** is the nodal ministry for the implementation of the scheme.
- MPs can also **recommend work of up to Rs. 25 lakhs per year outside their constituency** or state of election to promote national unity, harmony and fraternity.

- **Funds are non-lapsable in nature.**
- MPs need to recommend work worth at least **15% and 7.5% of their funds to create assets in areas inhabited by Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) respectively.**

Impact of the MPLADS project lapse:

- It would **hit several local area development projects** under implementation across the country, **especially in the five States** that went to polls this year as no funds were released for these States and constituencies citing the Model Code of Conduct.

7.11 CABINET APPROVES CONTINUATION OF SAMAGRA SHIKSHA SCHEME FOR SCHOOL EDUCATION FROM 1ST APRIL, 2021 TO 31ST MARCH, 2026

Recently, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given its approval for continuation of the revised **Samagra Shiksha Scheme** for a period of five years i.e., **from 2021-22 to 2025-26.**

Genesis of Samagra Shiksha Scheme

- The Union Budget of 2018-19 has announced that **school education would be treated holistically and without segmentation** from pre-primary to class XII.
- The Department of Education has launched the **Integrated Scheme for School Education, Samagra Shiksha** in 2018.
- It was launched by subsuming the erstwhile Centrally Sponsored Schemes of **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE).**

Samagra Shiksha Scheme

- It is an integrated scheme for school education **covering the entire gamut from pre-school to class XII.**
- It is implemented as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme** through a single **State Implementation Society (SIS)** at the State level.
- At the National level, there is a **Governing Council/Body headed by the Minister of Education** and a **Project Approval Board (PAB)** headed by Secretary, Department of School Education and Literacy.
- The Governing Council/body will be empowered to **modify financial and programmatic norms and approve the detailed guidelines** for implementation within the overall Framework of the scheme.

- It covers **1.16 million schools, over 156 million students and 5.7 million Teachers of Government and Aided schools** (from pre-primary to senior secondary level) by involving all stakeholders of the school ecosystem.
- It aims to:
 - Universalize access to school education;
 - Promote equity through the inclusion of disadvantaged groups and weaker sections; and
 - Improve the quality of education across all levels of school education.

Objectives of Samagra Shiksha Scheme

- Implementing the recommendations of the **National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020)**;
- Implementation of **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009**;
- Early **Childhood Care** and Education;
- Emphasis on **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy**;
- Thrust on **Holistic, Integrated, Inclusive and activity based Curriculum and Pedagogy** to impart 21st century skills to the students;
- Provision of **quality education** and enhancing learning outcomes of students;
- Bridging **Social and Gender Gaps** in School Education;
- Ensuring **equity and inclusion** at all levels of school education;
- Strengthening and up-gradation of **State Councils for Educational Research and Training (SCERTs)/State Institutes of Education and District Institutes for Education and Training (DIET)** as nodal agency for teacher training;
- Ensuring **safe, secure and conducive learning environment** and maintenance of standards in schooling provisions and
- Promoting **vocational education**

Significance of Samagra Shiksha Scheme

- It **treats school education as a continuum** and is in accordance with **Sustainable Development Goal for Education (SDG-4)**.
- It aims to **ensure inclusive and equitable quality education** and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- It provides support for the **implementation of the Right to Education (RTE) Act**.

- It has been **aligned with the recommendations of NEP 2020** to ensure that all children have access to quality education with an equitable and inclusive classroom environment.

Objectives of Revamped Samagra Shiksha

- All child centric interventions will be provided **directly to the students through DBT mode** on an IT based platform over a period of time.
- It will have an **effective convergence architecture** with various Ministries/ developmental agencies of the Centre and State Governments.
- The expansion of **vocational education will be done in convergence** with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and other Ministries providing funding for Skills.
- The existing infrastructure of schools and ITIs and Polytechnics will be used to **ensure optimum utilization of the facilities**, not only for school going children but also for out of school children.
- It has provided **provision of training of Master Trainers** for training of Anganwadi workers and In-service teacher training for ECCE teachers.
- It includes provision of upto **Rs 500 per child for Teaching Learning Materials (TLM)**, indigenous toys and games, play based activities per annum for pre-primary sections in Government Schools.
- NIPUN Bharat aims to ensure that every child **achieves the desired learning competencies in reading, writing and numeracy** at the end of grade III and not later than grade V has been launched under the scheme.

7.12 11 INDUSTRIAL CORRIDORS WITH 32 PROJECTS TO BE DEVELOPED IN 4 PHASES IN THE COUNTRY AS PART OF NATIONAL INDUSTRIAL CORRIDOR PROGRAMME (NICP)

Recently, the government has approved development of **11 Industrial Corridors with 32 Projects** to be developed in four phases in the country as part of **National Industrial Corridor Programme (NICP)**.

National Industrial Corridor Programme (NICP)

- The **Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor was the first corridor** taken up for development in 2011.
- The other industrial corridors viz. **Amritsar- Kolkata, Chennai-Bangalore, Vizag-Chennai, East Coast etc.** were added to be part of the umbrella NICP.
- It is being implemented in close **cooperation with the State Governments** who provide land as their share of equity in the programme.

- The **National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust (NICDIT) under the DPIIT** is the overarching institutional framework to implement the programme.
- The mandate of the existing **Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor Project and Implementation Trust Fund (DIMC-PITF)** was expanded and the **National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust (NICDIT)** was established in December, 2016.

Phases of National Industrial Corridor Programme (NICP)

- **11 Industrial Corridors Projects** are being taken up for development with 32 Projects to be developed in four phases up to 2024-25:
 - Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC);
 - Chennai Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC);
 - Amritsar Kolkata Industrial Corridor (AKIC);
 - East Coast Industrial Corridor (ECIC) with Vizag Chennai Industrial Corridor (VCIC);
 - Bengaluru Mumbai Industrial Corridor (BMIC);
 - Extension of CBIC to Kochi via Coimbatore;
 - Hyderabad Nagpur Industrial Corridor (HNIC);
 - Hyderabad Warangal Industrial Corridor (HWIC);
 - Hyderabad Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (HBIC);
 - Odisha Economic Corridor (OEC);
 - Delhi Nagpur Industrial Corridor (DNIC)
- **Phase 1: Projects under implementation and nearing completion**
 - **Dholera Special Investment Region** (22.5 sq. kms) under DMIC in Gujarat;
 - **ShendraBidkin Industrial Area** (18.55 sq. kms) under DMIC in Maharashtra;
 - **Integrated Industrial Township Greater Noida** in Uttar Pradesh (747.5 acres) under DMIC in Uttar Pradesh; and
 - **Integrated Industrial Township Vikram Udyogpuri** near Ujjain (1100 acres) under DMIC in Madhya Pradesh
- **Phase 2: Projects in advance stage of planning and implementation to be initiated by 2021**
 - **Integrated Multi Modal Logistics Hub at Nangal Chaudhary** (886 acres) in Haryana under DMIC has been approved by CCEA and implementation is likely to be initiated shortly;
 - **Krishnapatnam Industrial Area** (2,500 acres) in Andhra Pradesh and Tumakuru Industrial Area (1,736 acres) in Karnataka under CBIC has been approved by NICDIT and approval from CCEA is being sought;

- For Multi Modal Logistics Hub (MMLH) & Multi Modal Transport Hub (MMTH) (1,208 acres) at Greater Noida in UP under DMIC, NICDIT has accorded its approval & CCEA approval is being sought;
- As part of DMIC, for **Dighi Port Industrial Area** (7413 acres), activities pertaining to detailed master planning and preliminary engineering has been completed; and
- As part of **Hyderabad Warangal Industrial Corridor**, master planning has been completed for Hyderabad (8000 acres)
- **Phase 3: Projects under development and implementation likely to be initiated by 2023**
 - As part of CBIC and its extension to Kochi, activities pertaining to detailed master planning and preliminary engineering for Ponneri (4,000 acres) and Dharmapuri Salem (1733 acres) in Tamil Nadu and Palakkad (1,878 acres) in Kerala has been initiated
- **Phase 4: Projects under conceptualization and implementation likely to be initiated by 2024**
 - For VCIC Corridor, project development activities are being initiate for **Kopporthy and Chittoor in Andhra Pradesh** and tender documents for selection of consultants have been issued.
 - For AKIC Corridor, **Integrated Manufacturing Cluster at PragKhurpia** (2,935 acres) under AKIC in Uttarakhand is being taken up and tender documents for selection of consultants have been issued.
 - As part of **Hyderabad Nagpur Industrial Corridor**, master planning has been completed for Zaheerabad (3500 acres)

Significance of National Industrial Corridor Programme (NICP)

- It has been conceived to **promote world class manufacturing facilities** and develop futuristic industrial cities in India.
- The broad objective of NICP is to **provide plug and play infrastructural facilities** for setting up large scale manufacturing units.
- The programme is meant to compete with the best manufacturing and investment destinations in the world by converging next generation technologies across different sectors.
- The industrial nodes and projects are being developed under the programme to **facilitate manufacturing investments and increasing our participation** in the global value chains.
- The facilities under the NICP are being offered as a **showcase to potential global investors** in the shifting of their large-scale manufacturing investments post Covid-19 pandemic.

- It is also expected to help in **realizing the goal of Aatmanirbhar Bharat** by encouraging large scale domestic manufacturing.

7.13 PAHCHAN INITIATIVE

Recently, the Ministry of Textiles has informed that a total of 26.79 lakh artisans have been registered so far under **Pahchan initiative**.

Pahchan Initiative?

- It was **launched in 2016** by the then Union Minister of Textiles.
- It is an **initiative of Ministry of Textiles** to register and provide **Identity (ID) cards to handicraft artisans** and link them to a national database.
- Pahchan cards scheme is a **new upgraded ID card for artisans that will be linked with their Aadhaar numbers and bank accounts** so that they can receive direct cash transfer benefit.
- It has the information of handicrafts artisans viz. **name & address, Aadhaar Card number, mobile number and craft practiced**.

Significance of Pahchan initiative

- The ID card will **enable the artisans to avail easy loan** at nominal interest rate.
- The ID cardholders will get the **benefit of life insurance** and **Rs.1200 per year for their children** studying between Class IX and Class XII.

7.14 E-Prisons Project

Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs has provided financial assistance of Rs.99.49 crores to the States and Union Territories (UTs) for **E-Prisons Project**.

What is E-Prisons Project?

- It aims at **computerization of the functioning of prisons** in the country.
- It has been **operationalised in all States and Union Territories**.
- It is developed by **National Informatics Centre (NIC)**, Ministry of Electronics & IT (MeitY).

- It is **cloud based product** designed with easy to use GUI and embedded with a comprehensive security features.
- It can be **easily adopted by any state prisons department** with minimum customization efforts since all the possible customization features are parameterized and can be configured by the users.

Purpose of E-Prisons Project

- The e-Prisons data has been integrated with Police and Court system under the **Inter-operable Criminal Justice System**.
- The e-Prisons uses data maintained by the States and Union Territories on the **National Prisons Information Portal** as per protocols notified for e-Prisons.
- The system can be accessed through the secure **National Informatics Centre (NIC) network**, exclusively by the authorized officials of Law Enforcement Agencies and Prisons, through **Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS)**.
- The scope of this project is to **computerize and integrate all the activities related to prison and prisoner management** in the jail.
- It provides vital information about the **inmates, lodged in the prisons, in real time environment to the prison officials** and other entities, involved in Criminal Justice System.
- It also facilitates **online visit request and grievance redressal**.

Components of E-Prisons Project

- **e-Prisons MIS:** Management Information System used at the prisons for their day to day regular activities; The major modules of ePrisons MIS are:
 - Prisoner Information Management System (PIMS);
 - Visitor Management System (eVisitor);
 - Hospital Management System (eHospital);
 - Legal Aid Management System;
 - Inventory Management System;
 - Prison Management System (PMS);
 - Police Intelligence System;
 - Court Monitoring; and
 - Kiosk Information

- **NPIP:** National Prisons Information Portal is a citizen centric portal showing statistical data of various prisons in the country
 - Visitors can book their visit request to meet their ward inside the prison through this portal;
 - Grievances with respect to their wards inside the prisons can also be submitted through the portal; and
 - This portal also provides with inmate tracking facilities in a secured way to various investigating agencies.
- **Kara Bazaar:** Portal for showcasing and selling the products manufactured in various prisons of the country by inmates.
 - Necessary platform required for onboarding for all the state prison departments are in place.

About Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS)

- It is a **common platform for information exchange** and analytics of all the pillars of the criminal justice system comprising of Police, Forensics, Prosecution, Courts & Prisons.
- It enables a **nationwide search on police, prisons & courts databases** across all States/ UTs in the country.
- It is invested under the **CCTNS project** of the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Its aim is to **reduce errors and time taken in sharing of necessary information** between the pillars, which often lead to larger challenges.

7.15 MISSION VATSALYA

Recently, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has informed the State/UT wise number of **Child Care Institutions (CCIs), Specialised Adoption Agencies (SAA)** and Open Shelters supported under the **Child Protection Services (CPS)** under **Mission Vatsalya**.

What is Mission Vatsalya?

- The Ministry has classified all its major programmes under three umbrella schemes i.e. **Mission Poshan 2.0, Mission Vatsalya** and **Mission Shakti**, for their better implementation.
- Mission VATSALYA will look into **child protection services** and **child welfare services**.
- The central government has **allocated Rs. 900 crores** in the budget 2021-2022 for Mission Vatsalya.

About Child Protection Services (CPS) Scheme

- It is erstwhile known as **Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS)**.
- It is a flagship programme to **provide preventive and statutory care, and rehabilitation services to children** in need of care
- It provides protection to those in conflict with the law as defined under the **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**.
- It is a **centrally sponsored scheme** aimed at building a **protective environment for children in difficult circumstances**, as well as other vulnerable children, through Government-Civil Society Partnership.
- It brings together **multiple existing child protection schemes of the Ministry under one comprehensive umbrella**, and integrates additional interventions for protecting children and preventing harm.
- It was brought under the **Umbrella Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)** scheme as one of its sub-schemes in 2017-18.

Services provided under Child Protection Services (CPS) Scheme

- **Institutional services:** Care, shelter and rehabilitation to both children in conflict with the law and children in need of care and protection through Child Care Institutes (CCIs). CCIs include Open Shelters, Children Homes, and Specialised Adoption Agencies (SAAs).
- **Family based non-institutional care:** The JJ Act provides for the rehabilitation and reintegration of children through sponsorship, foster care, adoption and aftercare. The 'aftercare' services are supposed to be provided to those in the 18 to 21 years age group.
- **Emergency outreach service through 'Childline':** The 'Childline' is a 24-hour emergency phone outreach service for children needing care and protection, linking them to long-term care and rehabilitation services.
- **General grant-in-aid for need-based or innovative interventions:** A grant-in-aid is given to states depending on the geographic locality and socio-economic status, among other considerations.

7.16 UNION MINISTER FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT LAUNCHES PM DAKSH PORTAL AND MOBILE APP

Recently, the Union Minister for Social Justice and Empowerment has decided to launch '**PM-DAKSH**' Portal and '**PM-DAKSH**' Mobile App.

PM-DAKSH Yojana

- It is a **National Action Plan** for the **marginalized persons of SC, OBC, EBC, DNT, Safaikaramcharies** including waste pickers.
- The **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MoSJ&E)**, caters for empowerment of the socially, educationally and economically marginalized sections of the society.
- The focus of the programme would be on **providing high quality skills through good quality institutions** so that the training can result in finding jobs or self employment ventures.
- The programme also engages with **skilling the SafaiKaramcharis** including Waste Pickers, and Women so that they can engage in self-employment activities.
- It would be implemented by the three Corporations:
 - **National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (NSFDC);**
 - **National Backward Classes Finance & Development Corporation (NBCFDC);** and
 - **National SafaiKaramcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC)**

Objectives of PM-DAKSH Yojana

- The main purpose is to **increase the skill levels of the target youth** by providing for long term and short term skills, followed by settlement in employment/self-employment.
- Under PM-DAKSH Yojana, the **upgradation would be of the skill/process/design** so that the incomes will dramatically increase within their practicing vocations.
- A multi-pronged strategy to **enhance the competency level of the target groups and make them employable** both in self and wage-employment for their socio-economic development of the following sections of the target group:
 - Artisans may improve their **revenue generation capacities** within their practicing vocations;
 - Women may enter into self-employment thereby **financially empowering themselves** without neglecting their domestic activities; and
 - Youth may acquire **long-term training and specialization in employable vocations** giving them better standing in the job market

Methodology of Implementation of PM-DAKSH

- The DAKSH will be run through an **end-to-end IT system** that covers the entire ecosystem of the training programmes:
 - There will be a **DAKSH portal and DAKSH App** giving the areas in which training would be imparted.
 - The list of training agencies (which are already finalised by the implementing agencies) would be **pre-fed into the software**.
 - The **eligible candidates can register for training giving their Aadhaar numbers** and specify their area of interest, and select the institution where he/she would like to take the training.
 - All candidates who are **found suitable based on the qualifications and the aptitude test would be communicated** to the Training Provider on the DAKSH portal automatically.

7.17 STEPS TAKEN BY GOVERNMENT FOR THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SAANSAD ADARSH GRAM YOJANA (SAGY) IN ADOPTED GRAM PANCHAYATS

Recently, the Ministry of Rural Development has brought out a compilation of **127 Central Sector and Centrally Sponsored and 1806 State Schemes** for convergence under **Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY)**.

Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY)

- It is **launched by the Prime Minister** in 2014.
- The goal was to **develop three Adarsh Grams** by March 2019, of which one was to be achieved by 2016.
 - Under SAGY, five such Adarsh Grams (one per year) will be **selected and developed by 2024**.
- It places equal stress on **nurturing values of national pride, patriotism, community spirit, self-confidence** and on developing infrastructure.
- It will keep the **soul of rural India alive while providing its people with quality access** to basic amenities and opportunities to enable them to shape their own destiny.
- Its goal is to **translate the comprehensive and organic vision of Mahatma Gandhi** into reality, keeping in view the present context.
- Under SAGY, **each Member of Parliament adopts a Gram Panchayat** and guides its holistic progress giving importance for social development at par with infrastructure.

Objectives of Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana (SAGY)

- To trigger processes which lead to **holistic development of the identified Gram Panchayats**
- To substantially improve the **standard of living and quality of life of all sections** of the population through
 - Improved basic amenities
 - Higher productivity
 - Enhanced human development
 - Better livelihood opportunities
 - Reduced disparities
 - Access to rights and entitlements
 - Wider social mobilization
 - Enriched social capital
- To generate models of **local level development and effective local government** which can motivate and inspire neighboring Gram Panchayats to learn and adapt
- To nurture the identified **Adarsh Grams as schools of local development** to train other gram Panchayat

Selection of Village under SAGY

- A Gram Panchayat would be the basic unit. It will have a **population of 3000-5000 in plain areas and 1000-3000 in the hilly, tribal and difficult area.**
- The MP would be **free to identify a suitable Gram Panchayat to be developed as Adarsh Gram**, other than his/her own village or that of his/her spouse.
- The MP will **identify one Gram Panchayat to be taken up immediately**, and two other to be taken up little later.
- Lok Sabha MP has to **choose a Gram Panchayat from within his/her constituency** and Rajya Sabha MP a Gram Panchayat from the **rural area of a district of his/her choice in the State from which he/she is elected.**

7.18 NATIONAL COMMISSION OF WOMEN CHAIRPERSON REKHA SHARMA GETS NOMINATED FOR ANOTHER TERM

Recently, the Chairperson of the **National Commission for Women**, Smt. Rekha Sharma Gets has been nominated for another term of 3 years.

Genesis of National Commission for Women

- The **Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI)** recommended nearly two decades ago, the setting up of a National Commission for women to fulfill the surveillance functions to facilitate redressal of grievances.
- The Successive Committees/Commissions/Plans including the **National Perspective Plan for Women (1988-2000)** recommended the constitution of an apex body for women.
- In July 1990, the **HRD Ministry organized a National Level Conference** to elicit suggestions regarding the Bill.
- The **First Commission** was constituted on 31st January 1992 with **Mrs. Jayanti Patnaik as the Chairperson.**

National Commission for Women

- It was **set up as statutory body in January 1992** under the National Commission for Women Act, 1990.
- Its **objectives** are to:
 - **Review** the Constitutional and Legal safeguards for women;
 - **Recommend** remedial legislative measures;
 - **Facilitate** redressal of grievances; and
 - **Advise** the Government on all policy matters affecting women
- It took up the issue of **child marriage, sponsored legal awareness programmes, Parivarik Mahila Lok Adalats** and reviewed laws such as Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961, PNDT Act 1994, Indian Penal Code 1860 and the National Commission for Women Act, 1990.
- It **organized workshops/consultations, constituted expert committees on economic empowerment of women**, conducted workshops/seminars for gender awareness etc.

Mandate of National Commission for Women

- Investigate and examine all matters relating to the **safeguards provided for women under the Constitution** and other laws;

- Present to the Central Government, annually and at such other times as the Commission may deem fit, **reports upon the working** of those safeguard;
- Make in such reports **recommendations for the effective implementation** of those safeguards for the improving the conditions of women by the Union or any state;
- Review, from time to time, the exiting **provisions of the Constitution and other laws** affecting women and recommend amendments thereto;
- Take up cases of **violation of the provisions of the Constitution and of other laws relating to women** with the appropriate authorities;
- Look into complaints and take **suo moto notice of matters** relating to:
 - Deprivation of women's rights
 - Non-implementation of laws enacted to provide protection to women and also to achieve the objective of equality and development
 - Non-compliance of policy decisions, guidelines or instructions aimed at mitigating hardships and ensuring welfare and providing relief to women, and take up the issues arising out of such matters with appropriate authorities
- Call for special studies or investigations into specific problems or situations arising out of **discrimination and atrocities against women and identify the constraints**

Composition of Commission

- The Central Government shall constitute a body to be known as the **National Commission for Women to exercise the powers conferred on** and to perform the functions assigned to, it under this Act.
- The Commission shall consist of:
 - **A Chairperson**, committed to the cause of women, to be **nominated by the Central Government**.
 - **Five Members to be nominated by the Central Government** from amongst persons of ability, integrity and standing who have had experience in law or legislation, trade unionism, management of an industry potential of women, women's voluntary organisations etc.
 - Provided that at least one Member each shall be from amongst persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes respectively
 - **A Member-Secretary to be nominated by the Central Government** who shall be:
 - An expert in the field of management, organisational structure or sociological movement, or

- An officer who is a member of a civil service of the Union or of an all-India service or holds a civil post under the Union with appropriate experience

7.19 MARITAL RAPE GOOD GROUND TO CLAIM DIVORCE, SAYS KERALA HIGH COURT

Recently, the Kerala High Court on Friday held that **marital rape is a valid ground for divorce** even though it is not penalised in India.

Highlights

- The High Court said that a **husband's licentious disposition disregarding the autonomy of the wife is marital rape**, albeit such conduct cannot be penalised, it falls in the frame of physical and mental cruelty.
- The court observed that merely for the reason that the law does not recognise marital rape under penal law, **it does not inhibit the court from recognising the same as a form of cruelty to grant a divorce**.
- The court noted that marital rape occurs when the **husband is under the notion that the body of his wife owes to him** but in modern social jurisprudence, **spouses in marriage are treated as equal partners** and husband cannot claim any superior right over wife either with reference to individual status.
- The court said that it is **fundamental to the autonomy guaranteed under natural law and the Constitution** and law cannot force a spouse to suffer against his/her wish by denying divorce.
- The HC also said that the **divorce law should equip to deal with marital damages and compensation** and deal with human problems with a humane mind.

Laws defining Rape in India

- The definition of rape codified in **Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) includes all forms of sexual assault** involving non-consensual intercourse with a woman.
- The **exception 2 to Section 375 exempts unwilling sexual intercourse** between a husband and a wife over fifteen years of age from Section 375's definition of "rape".
- India is one of the thirty-six countries that **still have not criminalized** marital rape.

Violation of Constitutional Rights

- **Violation of Article 14:** Although the Constitution guarantees equality to all, Indian criminal law discriminates against female victims who have been raped by their own husbands.
- **Violation of Article 21:** The courts have begun to acknowledge a right to abstain from sexual intercourse and to be free of unwanted sexual activity enshrined in these broader rights to life and personal liberty.
 - The Supreme Court has explicitly recognized in Article 21 a right to make choices regarding intimate relations.

Road Ahead

- There **cannot be any difficulty in having a common code** of law to all communities, at least for marriage and divorce.
- Individuals are **free to perform their marriage in accordance with personal law**, but they cannot be absolved from compulsory solemnization of the marriage under secular law.
- **Marriage and divorce must be under the secular law** which is the need of the hour and the time has come to revamp the marriage law in our country.
- The framework of divorce law must be with an **objective to help individuals to take a decision on their own affairs** which must promote a platform at different levels to enable individuals to exercise free choice.

7.20 WHY NCPDR HAS RECOMMENDED THAT MINORITY SCHOOLS BE BROUGHT UNDER RTE

Recently, the **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPDR)** has released a report titled the “**Impact of Exemption under Article 15 (5) with regards to Article 21A of the Constitution of India on Education of Children in Minority Communities**”.

Highlights

- The report assesses that minority schools are **exempt from implementing The Right to Education (RTE) policy** and do not fall under the government’s **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan**.
- The objective of the report was to **assess the impact of this exemption of minority educational institutions** from various guidelines that are mandatory for non-minority institutions.

- The Commission is of the view that the two different sets of rules i.e. **Article 21A and Article 30** and **Article 15 (5)** are creating a conflicting picture between fundamental right of children and right of minority communities.
- The NCPCR started **holding consultations with the students, teachers and communities** in 2015-16.

Genesis

- In 1992, India became a signatory to **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**, a human rights initiative which set out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children.
- In 2002, the 86th Amendment to the Constitution provided the **Right to Education as a fundamental right**.
- The 86th Amendment inserted **Article 21A**, which made the RTE a fundamental right for children aged between six and 14 years.
- The passage of the amendment was followed by the launch of the **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)**.
 - It is a **central government scheme implemented in partnership with the state governments** that aimed to provide “useful and relevant, elementary education” to all children between six and 14 years.

Provisions for exemption of Minority under RTE

- In 2006, the **93rd Constitution Amendment Act inserted Clause (5) in Article 15** which enabled the State to create special provisions, such as reservations for advancement of any backward classes of citizens like Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, in all aided or unaided educational institutes, except minority educational institutes.
- The government subsequently brought the **Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009**, which centres around inclusive education for all, making it mandatory to include underprivileged children in schools.
- **Section 12(1)(c) of the Act provided for 25 percent reservation of seats** in unaided schools for admission of children from economically weaker sections and disadvantaged groups.
- **Article 30 of the Constitution states the right of minorities to establish and administer educational institutions**, with a view to provide opportunities to children from different religious and linguistic minority communities to have and conserve a distinct culture, script and language.

- The institutions **imparting religious education were exempted** from following the RTE Act through an amendment in 2012.
- The Supreme Court declared the **RTE Act inapplicable to schools with minority status with the view that the Act** should not interfere with the right of minorities to establish and administer institutions of their choice.

7.21 “SEED RAKHIS” UNDER ‘VRUKSHA BANDHAN PROJECT’

Recently, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs has launched the **Vrushka Bandhan Project**.

Vrushka Bandhan Project

- It is a **unique initiative of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs** in partnership with **The Art of Living Foundation**.
- Under the project, **1100 tribal women are creating Rakhis for Raksha Bandhan** with seeds of indigenous trees, which is a unique contribution to increasing forest cover & combating climate change.
- It is part of project sanctioned by **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** to the **Art of Living** under which **10000 tribal farmers of 10 tribal villages** in Aurangabad are being trained on sustainable natural farming based on **Go-Adharith farming techniques**.
- The 1100 members of the **MahilaKissan Manch** germinated the idea of creating Rakhis with indigenous seeds.
- The Rakhis are made of **indigenous seeds stuck on naturally dyed, soft indigenous, non-toxic, biodegradable cotton**.
- It is based on **GauadharitParamparagatKheti** which seeks to preserve and revive the Traditional Ecological Knowledge of tribal communities and protect them from the negative effects of chemical agriculture.

7.22 THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLIES OF BOTH THE STATES WERE FREE TO MAKE CONSTITUTIONS OF THEIR SAMVAD 2.0

Recently, the Union Minister of Women & Child Development has launched 2nd phase of SAMVAD programme.

SAMVAD Programme?

- SAMVAD is **Support, Advocacy & Mental health interventions for children in Vulnerable circumstances And Distress.**
- It is a **National Initiative and Integrated Resource** that works in child protection, mental health and psychosocial care.
- Its vision is to **enhance child and adolescent psychosocial well-being**, particularly of children in difficult circumstances, through promotion of integrated approaches to mental health and protection.
- It has been **instrumental in providing coping mechanism for children in distress** by training close to 1 lakh stakeholders comprising of Child Protection Functionaries, tele-counsellors, educators etc.

Objectives of SAMVAD Programme

- To develop **standardized child-centric modules and resources** for the capacity building of primary, secondary and tertiary level psychological and mental healthcare service providers.
- To strengthen **knowledge and skills in child and adolescent protection and psychological care** in various cadres of child care service providers in the country.
- To enhance child and adolescent **protection and psychological care implemented by government and NGOs** by providing technical support.
- To undertake **studies, audits, research and advocacy on issue pertaining to child and adolescent protection** and related issues of mental health and psychological care.
- To utilize the **experiences of capacity building, technical programmatic report and research in informing** child and adolescent laws and policies in the country.

Features of SAMVAD 2.0 Programme

- It will engage for the first time in independent India **with functionaries in Panchayats thereby ushering in a silent revolution** in addressing psychosocial challenges amongst vulnerable children.

- It is slated to **begin work with Panchayati Raj systems** to:
 - **Integrate child protection and mental health** in aspirational districts across the country; and
 - **Facilitate awareness generation and improve service delivery** at the grassroot level
- Its new initiatives with regards to **mental health and psychosocial care of children** in difficult circumstances have encompassed:
 - Specialized training curriculum on childhood trauma;
 - Interventions for children in conflict with the law;
 - Forensics in child and adolescent psychiatry and mental health; and
 - Education and mental health support to children with special needs, protection and care

7.23 FILL UP VACANT POSTS IN MINORITY COMMISSION

Recently, the **Delhi High Court has extended the deadline** given to the Centre to **nominate persons to all the vacant positions** in the National Commission for Minorities by two months.

Constitutional rights and safeguards provided to the minorities in India

- The Constitution of India **does not define the word ‘Minority’** and **only refers to ‘Minorities’** and speaks of those ‘based on religion or language’.
- The Constitution provides **two sets of rights of minorities** which can be placed in ‘**common domain**’ and ‘**separate domain**’.
 - The rights which fall in the ‘common domain’ are those which are **applicable to all the citizens of our country**.
 - The rights which fall in the ‘separate domain’ are those which are **applicable to the minorities only and these are reserved to protect their identity**.

Directive Principles of State Policy and Minorities

- **Article 38 (2)**: obligation of the State ‘to endeavour to eliminate inequalities in status, facilities and opportunities’ amongst individuals and groups of people residing in different areas or engaged in different vocations
- **Article 46**: obligation of State ‘to promote with special care’ the educational and economic interests of ‘the weaker sections of the people’ (besides Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes)

Fundamental Duties and Minorities

- The **Part IVA of the Constitution**, relating to Fundamental Duties as provided in Article 51 A applies in full to all citizens, including those belonging to Minorities.
- **Article 51A** which is of special relevance for the Minorities stipulates as under:
 - Citizens' duty to **promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood** amongst all the people of India 'transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; and
 - Citizens' duty to **value and preserve the rich heritage** of our composite culture

Fundamental Rights and Minorities

- **Article 29(1)**: right of 'any section of the citizens' to 'conserve' its 'distinct language, script or culture'.
- **Article 29(2)**: restriction on denial of admission to any citizen, to any educational institution maintained or aided by the State, 'on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them'.
- **Article 30(1)**: Right of all Religious and Linguistic Minorities to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
- **Article 30 (2)**: freedom of Minority-managed educational institutions from discrimination in the matter of receiving aid from the State.
- **Article 347**: special provision relating to the language spoken by a section of the population of any State.
- **Article 350 A**: provision for facilities for instruction in mother-tongue at primary stage.
- Article 350 B: provision for a Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities and his duties; and
- Sikh community's right of 'wearing and carrying of kirpans

Genesis of National Commission for Minorities

- The setting up of **Minorities Commission** was envisaged in the Ministry of Home Affairs Resolution in 1978.
- In 1984 the **Minorities Commission** was detached from **Ministry of Home Affairs** and placed under the newly created Ministry of Welfare.
- The **first Statutory National Commission** was set up on 17th May 1993.

Composition of National Commission for Minorities

- The NCM Act 1992 provides that the **Commission consists of:**
 - A Chairperson;
 - A Vice- Chairperson; and
 - Five Members
- The persons are to be **nominated by the Central Government** from amongst persons of eminence, ability and integrity.
- Each Member **holds office for a period of three years** from the date of assumption of office.

Functions of National Commission for Minorities

- Evaluation of the progress of the **development of minorities** under the Union and States;
- Monitoring of the **working of the safeguards for minorities** provided in the Constitution and in laws enacted by Parliament and the State Legislatures;
- Making recommendations for the **effective implementation of safeguards** for the protection of the interests of minorities by the Central Government or the State Governments;
- Looking into specific **complaints regarding deprivation of rights and safeguards of minorities** and taking up such matters with the appropriate authorities;
- Getting studies to be **undertaken into the problems arising out of any discrimination** against minorities and recommending measures for their removal; and
- Conducting studies, research and analysis on the issues relating to **socio-economic and educational development of minorities**

7.24 HIGH-SPEED NET COMES TO A DEEP JUNGLE: JAN SHIKSHAN SANSTHAN (JSS)

Recently, the Jan ShikshanSansthan (JSS) has brought **high-speed internet to some of the remotest tribal hamlets** deep inside the Nilambur jungle.

Highlights

- The tribal hamlets of **Palakkayam, Vettilakkolli and Ambumala got high-speed internet** for the first time due to long-distance Wi-Fi technology.
- The JSS's **technical partner C4S provided support** for the long-distance Wi-Fi on 5GHz frequency.
- With the help of five towers, **100-mbps internet is made available at Palakkayam, Ambumala, and Vettilakkolli hamlets** in Chaliyar grama panchayat.

- The **high-speed internet could be provided even up to 100 km** without any transmission loss using long-distance Wi-Fi technology.

Jan ShikshanSansthan (JSS)

- It is formerly known as **Shramik Vidyapeeth**.
- It is a **unique creation of Government of India** which is being implemented through NGOs in the country since 1967.
- It was renamed as **Jan ShikshanSansthan in 2000**.
- It was transferred from **Ministry of Education** (erstwhile Ministry of Human Resource Development) to **Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship** in July, 2018.
- It is **implemented through NGOs** with 100% grants from the Government of India.
- JSS are registered under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860**
- The affairs of Jan ShikshanSansthan are **managed by respective Board of Management** approved by the Government of India.

Objectives of Jan ShikshanSansthan (JSS)

- **To enhance occupational skills and technical knowledge** of the neo-literates and individuals having basic school education.
- **To raise efficiency, increase productive ability** and enhance their livelihood opportunities.
- **To identify and assist traditional skills** in the district through skilling/upskilling.
- **To create master trainers who are eligible to work** in a department/agency of skill development through training and orientation programmes.
- **To collaborate and coordinate** with other departments/agencies who are working in the field of skill development.
- **To widen the range of knowledge and understand** the social, economic and political systems and creating environmental awareness.
- **To promote national values** and align with national programmes.
- **To promote self-employment and facilitate financial support**, including loans for the target group through linkage with credit and consortium membership.

Significance of Jan ShikshanSansthan (JSS)

- It aims to provide **vocational training to non-literates, neo-literates as well as school drop-outs** in rural regions by identifying skills that have a relevant market in that region.
- Its objectives is to **uplift this rural population economically by imparting essential skills training**, thereby enabling local trades to grow and creating new opportunities for the natives of the region.
- Its mandate is to **provide vocational to persons with rudimentary level of education** upto 8th and school drop-outs upto 12th standard in the age group of 15-45 years.
- The priority groups are **women, SC, ST, minorities and other backward sections** of the society.

Functions of Jan ShikshanSansthan (JSS)

- Identify **precise target areas and groups** by developing socio-economic profiles.
- Identity and ascertain **educational and vocational needs** of different categories to clientele groups.
- **Explore, innovate and try new approaches** to meet the requirements of different groups through programmes based on national educational training.
- Manage the **training and orientation of resource individuals/instructors** involved in the planning and implementation of various agreements.
- Render **consultancy services to agencies and enterprises** that are planning to organise programmes for training and vocational education of similar target groups.
- Promote organisation like **co-operative societies, manuals and associations of women, youth and workers** to undertake collective activities for socio-economic development.
- Provide **follow-up services** to the beneficiaries of JSS.

Eligibility Criteria under JSS Scheme

- The organisation has to be **registered for a minimum period of three years** at the time of application.
- It must have a proper **Constitution Memorandum or Articles of Association**.
- It has to have a **properly constituted Managing/Governing Body** with its powers and duties mentioned in its constitution.
- It should have **experience in the field of formal/non-formal education**, Skill Development, adult education, vocational training, development and community development.
- It must have been through a **financial audit for the last three years**.

- It must maintain a **report for the last three years**.

7.25 ECONOMIC CRITERION NOT SOLE BASIS FOR CREAMY LAYER: SUPREME COURT

Recently, the Supreme Court has ruled that identifying a ‘**creamy layer**’ of backward classes **cannot be based purely on economic reasoning**.

Genesis

- The Supreme Court has stood firmly by its principle that **economic criterion alone cannot be the sole basis** for identifying a Backward Class member as “creamy layer” for nearly 3 decades.
- The State of Haryana has sought to **determine ‘creamy layer’ from backward classes solely** on the basis of economic criterion.
 - The first notification identified as “**creamy layer**” **Backward Class members** whose gross **annual income exceeded ₹6 lakh**.
 - It said Backward Class sections whose **families earn less than ₹3 lakh would get priority over their counterparts** who earn more than ₹3 lakh but less than ₹6 lakh.

Observation made by Judiciary on determining Creamy Layer

- A Division Bench of the Supreme Court led by Justice L. Nageswara Rao did not swerve from the settled position when it quoted that “**the basis of exclusion of creamy layer cannot be merely economic**”.
- The Supreme Court **struck down the notifications as a “flagrant violation”** of the 2016 Act.
 - It said Section 5 (2) of the Act required the **State to consider social, economic and other factors together** to identify and exclude Backward Class members as “creamy layer”.
- The Supreme Court then directed the Haryana government to **issue a fresh notification within three months** while considering the Indra Sawhney case and the criteria mentioned in Section 5(2) of the Act.
- The bench also clarified that **admissions and appointments that have already been made** on the basis of the notifications will not be disturbed.

What is a Creamy Layer?

- It is a concept that sets a **threshold within which OBC reservation** benefits are applicable.

- While there is a **27% quota for OBCs in government jobs and higher educational institutions**, those falling within the “creamy layer” cannot get the benefits of this quota.
- Based on the recommendation of the Second Backward Classes Commission (Mandal Commission), the government 1990 had notified **27% reservation for Socially and Educationally Backward Classes (SEBCs) in vacancies in civil posts and services** that are to be filled on direct recruitment.
- In 1992, the Supreme Court (**Indira Sawhney case**) upheld 27% reservation for OBCs, subject to exclusion of the creamy layer.
- “Creamy layer” is a term used for **members of a backward class who have a higher educational and economic standing** as compared to others in the group.
- Those identified in the “creamy layer” are **not entitled to reservation** in educational programmes and government jobs.

Determination of Creamy Layer

- An **expert committee headed by Justice (retired) R N Prasad** was constituted for fixing the criteria for determining the creamy layer.
- In 1993, the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) listed out **various categories of people of certain rank/status/income** whose children cannot avail benefit of OBC reservation.
- The current threshold is an **income of Rs 8 lakh per year** for those not in government.
- For children of government employees, the **threshold is based on their parents’ rank and not income**.
- The **income from salaries or agriculture land is not clubbed** while determining the creamy layer.

Constitutional Provisions related to Reservations

- **Article 14** of the Constitution guarantees equality before law and equal protection of laws to everyone.
- **Articles 16(1) and 16(2)** assure citizens equality of opportunity in employment or appointment to any government office.
- **Article 15(1)** generally prohibits any discrimination against any citizen on the grounds of religion, caste, sex or place of birth.
- **Articles 15(4) and 16(4)** state that these equality provisions do not prevent the government from making special provisions in matters of admission to educational institutions or jobs in favour of backward classes, particularly the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and the Scheduled Tribes (STs).

- **The Articles 16 (4) and 16 (4-A)** empower the State to make reservation in matters of appointment and promotion in favour of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes only “if in the opinion of the State they are not adequately represented in the services of the State”.

Article 29(2) bars discrimination against any citizen with regard to admission to educational institutions maintained by the government or receiving aid out of government funds on grounds of religion, race, caste etc.

7.26 INDIGENOUSLY BUILT INDIAN COAST GUARD SHIP 'VIGRAHA' DEDICATED TO THE NATION

Recently, the Ministry of Defence has dedicated to the Nation, indigenously built Coast Guard Ship 'Vigraha' in Chennai.

Indian Coast Guard Ship 'Vigraha'

- It is an **Offshore Patrol Vessel** designed and built indigenously by **M/s Larsen & Toubro Ship Building Ltd.**
- It is fitted with **advanced technology Radars, Navigation and Communication Equipment, Sensor and Machinery** capable of operating in tropical sea conditions.
- It will be **based at Visakhapatnam** and operate on **India's Eastern Seaboard under the Operational and Administrative Control** of the Commander, Coast Guard Region (East).
- It will be **deployed extensively for EEZ surveillance** and other duties as enshrined in the Coast Guard Charter, to safeguard the maritime interests of India.
- It is the **last vessel in the series of seven OPVs** built by L&T under a Ministry of Defence contract signed in 2015.
 - The other OPVs are '**Vikram**', '**Vijay**', '**Veer**', '**Varaha**', '**Varad**' and '**Vajra**'.
- The **word 'Vigraha'** has very beautiful interpretations in our texts.
 - On the one hand, its meaning has been told to be '**free from any kind of bondage**' and on the other hand, it has also been interpreted to mean the specific '**bondage of one's duty and obligations**'.
- Its design and construction process has been **certified by American Bureau of Shipping** as well as **Indian Registrar of Shipping**.

Operational Capability of Indian Coast Guard Ship 'Vigraha'

- It is armed with a **40/60 Bofors gun** and fitted with two **12.7 mm Stabilised Remote Control Gun (SRCG)** with Fire Control System.
- It is equipped with **Integrated Bridge System (IBS)**, **Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS)**, **Automated Power Management System (APMS)** and **High-Power External Firefighting (EFF) system**.
- It is designed to carry one **Twin Engine Helicopter** and four **high speed boats** for Boarding Operation, Search and Rescue, Law Enforcement and Maritime Patrol.
- It is capable of **carrying limited pollution response equipment** to contain oil spill at sea.

Offshore Patrol Vessel (OPV)?

- The OPVs are **long-range surface ships, capable of operation in maritime zones of India**, including island territories with helicopter operation capabilities.
- It is a **highly versatile ship**, designed to perform **Economic Exclusion Zone** management roles.
- Their roles include **coastal and offshore patrolling, policing maritime zones of India, control and surveillance, anti-smuggling and anti-piracy operations** with limited wartime roles.

8.1 WHAT A NEW STUDY SAYS ABOUT MICROPLASTIC POLLUTION IN RIVER GANGA

Recently, the Delhi-based NGO Toxics Link had released a study titled, “**Quantitative analysis of Microplastics along River Ganga**”.

Highlights

- The report has found that the **river which flows through five states covering about 2,500 km before flowing into the Bay of Bengal**, is heavily polluted with microplastics.
- The samples of Ganga’s water were collected from **Haridwar, Kanpur and Varanasi and microplastics were found in all of them**.
- The study found out that apart from microplastics, there were other kinds of plastics as well such as **single-use plastic and secondary plastic products in Ganga water**.
- The report highlighted that the **samples taken at Varanasi had the highest concentration** of plastic pollution.

- The study notes that **untreated sewage from densely populated cities across the river's course**, along with industrial waste and religious offerings that are wrapped in non-degradable plastic add a significant amount of pollutants into the river.
- The study found out that the **waste and plastic materials break down further** and are eventually carried into the Bay of Bengal and then into the ocean which is the "ultimate sink" of all plastics that are used by humans.

Microplastics?

- Microplastics are **plastic debris smaller than 5mm in length**, or about the size of a sesame seed.
- Microplastics come from a variety of sources, including from **larger plastic debris that degrades into smaller and smaller pieces**.
- Microbeads, a type of microplastic, are **very tiny pieces of manufactured polyethylene plastic** that are added as exfoliants to health and beauty products.
- They are the **most notorious because of their small size**, on average microplastics are less than 5 mm in length or roughly equal to five pinheads.

Impact of Microplastics on Marine Environment

- According to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), **at least 8 million tonnes of plastic end up in the oceans every year** and makes up about 80 per cent of all marine debris from surface waters to deep-sea sediments.
- The **plastic can take hundreds to thousands of years to decompose** depending on the type of plastic and where it has been dumped.
- The plastic pollution impacts **marine life, ocean health, coastal tourism and even human health**.
- More than **663 marine species are affected by marine debris** and **11 percent of them** are said to be related to **microplastic ingestion**.
- They are **ingested by marine habitants** including fish, corals, planktons and sea mammals and are then carried further into the food chain.

In the case of humans, most of the **microplastics can be found in food, water and food containers** and their ingestion can cause health problems.

8.2 WHY 'NET ZERO' CARBON TARGETS MAY NOT BE ENOUGH TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE

Recently, the independent charitable organization **Oxfam** has said that '**net zero**' carbon targets that many countries have announced may be a "**dangerous distraction**" from the priority of cutting carbon emissions.

Net Zero?

- Net-zero, which is also referred to as **carbon-neutrality**, does not mean that a country would bring down its emissions to zero.
- It would be gross-zero, which means reaching a state where **there are no emissions at all**, a scenario hard to comprehend.
- A net-zero is a state in which a **country's emissions are compensated by absorption and removal of greenhouse gases** from the atmosphere.

Net Zero Targets announced by countries

- In 2019, the **New Zealand government passed the Zero Carbon Act**, which committed the country to zero carbon emissions by 2050 or sooner.
- In 2019, the **UK's parliament passed legislation requiring the government** to reduce the UK's net emissions of greenhouse gases by 100 per cent relative to 1990 levels by the year 2050.
- The US president Joe Biden announced that the country will **cut its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030**.
- The European Commission has asked all of its **27 member countries to cut emissions by 55 per cent below 1990 levels by 2030** under Fit for 55.
- In 2020, China also announced that it would become **net-zero by the year 2060** and that it would not allow its emissions to peak beyond what they are in 2030.

Highlights on Net Zero Targets

- The report says that if the challenge of change is tackled only by way of planting more trees, then **about 1.6 billion hectares of new forests would be required to remove the world's excess carbon emissions by the year 2050**.
- It says that to **limit global warming below 1.5°C and to prevent irreversible damage from climate change**, the world needs to collectively be on track and should aim to cut emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 from 2010 levels.

- It states that if only land-based methods to deal with climate change are used, **food rises are expected to rise even more.**
- It highlighted that if the entire energy sector -whose emissions continue to soar- were to set similar 'net-zero' targets, **it would require an area of land nearly the size of the Amazon rainforest.**
- It emphasizes that **reducing emissions cannot be considered a substitute** for cutting emissions.

Risks associated with Net Zero Targets

- According to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), even if the current net zero commitments were fully implemented, our **world would still see 2.7°C of warming** by the end of the century.
- It would have **profound consequences for people and vulnerable communities**, increasing the likelihood of them facing more frequent and more intense droughts and flooding.
- Many of the net zero targets are **vague and poorly defined**, which means that they can be used as a way for countries and companies to 'greenwash' their activities as they go about business as usual.
- The vast majority of net zero commitments (over 80%) are **no further advanced** than the proposal or strategy stage.
- Most countries, states and cities cover only CO₂ emissions, while **only 27% of companies cover Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions** (as defined by the Greenhouse Gas Protocol) in their targets.
- The long-term net zero targets **distract attention from delivering near-term and tangible climate action.**
- Another consequence of net zero pledges is that **they have shifted the framework for climate commitments** from a focus on reducing emissions to a scenario that involves a mix of emissions reductions and removals.
- The net zero commitments could dramatically **increase demand for land to be used for carbon sequestration**, jeopardizing people's rights to food and to land.

Policy Recommendations for Net Zero Targets

- The net zero targets must **prioritize ambitious emissions reductions to align with the goal of limiting warming** to below 1.5°C and ensure rapid decarbonization by 2030.
- For companies, **it is important that long-term net zero targets are based on robust science-based targets** aligned with the goal of limiting warming to below 1.5°C.
- The net zero commitments must be **backed by meaningful transparency and disclosure.**

- The land-based climate action must be **anchored in food first, rights-based approaches** that help to achieve zero hunger and zero emissions.

8.3 PROJECT REPLAN (REducingPLAstic from Nature)

Recently, the Khadi & Village Industries Commission (KVIC) has secured **Patent registration for its plastic-mixed handmade paper.**

Key Highlights

- The patent certificate was **issued to KVIC's Kumarappa National Handmade Paper Institute (KNHPI)**, Jaipur.
- The **idea of developing plastic-mixed handmade paper** was invented in 2018 and the project was executed by the team of scientists at KNHPI.
- The plastic-mixed handmade paper was developed under **Project REPLAN (REducingPLAstic from Nature)**.
- The production of waste-plastic mixed handmade paper is likely to serve the twin objectives of **protecting the environment alongside creating sustainable employment.**
- The technology **developed by KVIC uses both high & low density waste polythene** that not only adds extra strength to the paper but also reduces the cost by up to 34%.
- The product is **recyclable and eco-friendly.**

About Project REPLAN (REducingPLAstic from Nature)

- It is the **first of its kind project in India**, where plastic waste is **de-structured, degraded, diluted and used with paper pulp** while making handmade paper and thus reduces plastic waste from nature.
- It was launched in 2018 in line with Prime Minister's '**Swachh Bharat Abhiyaan**' (Clean India Mission).
- It is a call for **fighting the menace of single-use plastic.**
- Its primary objective is to **remove the existing waste plastic material from nature** and use it in a semi-permanent manner.
- Under Project REPLAN, the waste plastic from nature is **collected, de-structured and de-graded and then mixed with paper pulp in a ratio of 80 is to 20.**

8.4 NATIONAL INNOVATION ON CLIMATE RESILIENT AGRICULTURE

Recently, the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare has informed that 7 climate resilient varieties and 650 district agricultural contingency plans have been developed under **National Innovation on Climate Resilient Agriculture**.

National Innovation on Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA)

- It is a **flagship network project** of the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare.
- It is a network project of the **Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR)** launched in 2011.
- It aims at **strategic research on adaptation and mitigation, demonstration of technologies on farmers' fields** and **creating awareness among farmers and other stakeholders** to minimize the climatic change impacts on agriculture.
- In the strategic research, the main thrust areas covered are:
 - Identifying most **vulnerable districts/regions**;
 - **Evolving crop varieties and management practices** for adaptation and mitigation; and
 - **Assessing climate change impacts** on livestock, fisheries and poultry and identifying adaptation strategies
- The project consists of four components viz. **Strategic Research, Technology Demonstration, Capacity Building** and **Sponsored/Competitive Grants**.

Objectives of NICRA

- To enhance the **resilience of Indian agriculture covering crops, livestock and fisheries** to climatic variability and climate change through development and application of improved production and risk management technologies
- To demonstrate **site specific technology packages** on farmers' fields for adapting to current climate risks
- To enhance the **capacity building of scientists and other stakeholders** in climate resilient agricultural research and its application

Features of NICRA

- **Strengthening the existing network research** on adaptation and mitigation (food crops, horticulture, livestock and fishery) with more infrastructure and capacity building;

- **Setting up of high through put phenotyping platforms** and temperature, CO₂, ozone gradient facilities at identified locations/ institutions including North East region;
- **Strengthening research on climate sensitive crops** like cotton, maize, sugarcane, onion, etc. which are critical for India's farm GDP/exports but not covered in the XI Plan;
- **Projected impacts on water availability at the river basin level** and participatory action research at large number of sites on evolving coping strategies through water saving technologies;
- **Evolving a national level pest and disease monitoring system** to assess the changing pest/disease dynamics under changed climate (both in crops and livestock);
- **Strengthening crop simulation and climate scenario down-scaling modeling capabilities** at major Institutes and a dedicated unit at IARI, New Delhi;
- **Piloting the operationalization of the district/block level** agromet advisory services through KVKs/district line departments and contingency plans during droughts and floods; and
- **Expanding the technology demonstration and dissemination** to 130 vulnerable districts of the country

8.5 WHAT THE COMMISSION FOR AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT IN NCR AIMS TO ACHIEVE AND WHY ARE SOME OPPOSING IT?

Recently, the **Commission for Air Quality Management in the National Capital Region and Adjoining Areas Bill, 2021**, was recently introduced in Parliament and passed by both Houses amid ongoing protests.

Highlights of the Bill

- The **monitoring and management of air quality in the Delhi-NCR region** has been done in pieces by multiple bodies such as
 - The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB);
 - The state pollution control boards;
 - The state governments in the region, including Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan, and
 - The Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA) of the National Capital Region
- They are **monitored by the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change (MoEF)**, and the Supreme Court which monitors air pollution as per the judgment in 'M C Mehta v/s Union of India' case in 1988.

- The bill seeks to create an overarching body to **consolidate all monitoring bodies**.
- The bill aims to bring them on one platform so that **air quality management can be carried out in a more comprehensive, efficient, and time-bound manner**.
- The bill seeks to **relieve the Supreme Court from having to constantly monitor pollution levels** through various cases.

Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR

- It has replaced the Supreme Court-appointed **Environment Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority (EPCA)**.
- It will **concentrate on improving air quality during winter** in particular and suggest measures to mitigate pollution throughout the year.

Powers of Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR

- The Commission is the **most powerful air pollution monitoring body** set up by the Centre to date.
- The rulings by the commission on air pollution will **override anything contained in any other law**.
- The powers of the commission will also **supersede that of any other body** in matters of air pollution.
- The orders of the commission will **prevail in cases where conflict may arise between orders or directions issued by the other state governments, state pollution control boards or even the CPCB**.
- It will have the power to **take measures, issue directions and entertain complaints** for the purpose of protecting and improving the quality of air in the National Capital Region.
- It will also **coordinate action taken by states on air pollution** and will lay down parameters for air quality and emission or discharge of environmental pollutants.
- It will also have **powers to restrict industries in any area, carry out random inspections of any premises** including factories and be able to close down an industry or cut its power and water supply in case of non-compliance.
- It will also be **monitoring the measures taken by the states** to prevent stubble burning.

Composition of Commission for Air Quality Management in NCR

- It will be **headed by a full-time chairperson** with:

- Experience of not less than 15 years in the field of environmental protection and pollution control; or
- Having administrative experience of not less than 25 years
- The **members of the commission** will also comprise of:
 - An official from the Environment Ministry;
 - Five ex-officio members who are either chief secretaries or secretaries from Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh;
 - One full-time member who is or has been a joint secretary;
 - Three full-time independent technical members who are experts in air pollution;
 - One technical member each from the Central Pollution Control Board and Indian Space Research Organisation, ;
 - Three members from non-governmental organisations who deal in air pollution; and
 - One representative of the National Institution for Transforming India
- It will also have **three members, being stakeholders from sectors** such as agriculture, industry, transport or construction apart from representatives of several ministries.
- The commission will have at least **three sub-committees** i.e. monitoring and identification, safeguarding and enforcement, and research and development.

Concerns associated with Commission for Air Quality Management Bill

- The protests against a section of the Bill that **proposes penalization for stubble burning** had started during the farmers' protests when unions had raised their voices against it.
- The offenses earlier had a **penal provision of imprisonment of upto 5 years and a fine of Rs 1 crore** which is the stiffest penalty that the Ministry has issued on air pollution offenses so far.
- The Clause 14 of the Act says that the **provisions of this section shall not apply to any farmer for causing air pollution by stubble burning** or mismanagement of agricultural residue.
 - It also says that the commission may **impose and collect environmental compensation from farmers causing air pollution by stubble burning**, at such rate and in such manner, as may be prescribed.
- The experts have criticized the **overwhelming number of bureaucrats in the commission**, with only a token representation of environmental bodies and non-governmental groups.
- The Act further says that **no civil court will have jurisdiction to entertain any suit, proceeding or dispute** pertaining to or arising out of the actions taken or directions issued by the commission.
 - The orders of the commission can **only be contested before the National Green Tribunal**.

- The environmentalists believe that it **restricts legal action that can be taken on environmental matters** as citizens so far could approach the Supreme Court and other courts directly with these issues.

8.6 PM GREETES ALL THOSE PASSIONATE ABOUT LION CONSERVATION ON WORLD LION DAY

Recently, the Prime Minister has greeted all those passionate about lion conservation on **World Lion Day**.

World Lion Day

- It is observed every year on **August 10** to raise awareness about the conservation of lions.
- In 2013, **co-founders Dereck and Beverly Joubert the Big Cat Initiative**, and National Geographic made a partnership to create World Lion Day.
- The **three objectives** of World Lion Day are:
 - The first is to **raise awareness of the plight of the lion** and the issues that the species faces in the wild.
 - The second is to **find ways to protect the big cat's natural environment**, such as creating more national parks and reducing the areas in which people can settle.
 - The third is to **educate people who live near wild cats** on the dangers and how to protect themselves.

About Lion

- The lion is also known as **Panthera Leo** and is considered the king of the jungle, being the largest species on earth.
- The lion is a **vulnerable species** on the IUCN Red List.
- The **5 biggest cats** are found mostly in India, including the **Royal Bengal Tiger, Indian leopard, Clouded Leopard, and Snow leopard**.
- India is also recorded as the **highest lion population** with an increase of 29 percent from 2015 to 2020.

Significance of Lion

- Lions maintain the **ecological balance and ensure the protection of natural forests** and help in the conservation of biodiversity.
- The government of India is **initiating schemes and projects for the conservation of lions**.

- It might **affect the ecosystem of the region** if the majestic predators are not protected.

About Asiatic Lion

- They are **slightly smaller** than African lions.
- The most striking morphological character, which is always seen in Asiatic lions, and rarely in African lions, is a **longitudinal fold of skin running along its belly**.
- Asian lions used to range from **Turkey, across Asia, to eastern India**, but the rise of firearms across the world meant that they were hunted to near-extinction for sport.
- It is protected under **Schedule I of Wildlife (Protection) Act 1972** and listed in **Appendix I of CITES**.
- It is listed as **Endangered** on IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
- There are five protected areas that currently exist to protect the Asian lion i.e. **Gir Sanctuary, Gir National Park and Pania Sanctuary** to form the Gir Conservation Area (GCA).
 - The other two wildlife sanctuaries, **Mitiyala and Girnar**, protect satellite areas within dispersal distance of the Gir Conservation Area.

8.7 KAZIRANGA BECOMES INDIA'S FIRST NATIONAL PARK TO BE EQUIPPED WITH SATELLITE PHONES

Recently, the **Kaziranga National Park (KNP)** became the first national park in India to be **equipped with satellite phones**.

Highlights

- The step to equip the **forest personnel with satellite phones** would boost anti-poaching measures in the park.
- The Assam State Disaster Management Authority (ASDMA) **procured the ten satellite phones for the National Park** at an estimated cost of Rs 16 lakh.
- The **Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL)** will be the service provider and the park authorities will bear the monthly expenses.
- The satellite phones will be used in the **park's six ranges with no wireless or poor mobile connectivity**.

Kaziranga National Park

- It was **formed in 1908** on the recommendation of Mary Curzon.
- It is located in the **edge of the Eastern Himalayan biodiversity hotspots** i.e. Golaghat and Nagaon district of Assam.
- It was declared as a **World Heritage Site by UNESCO** in 1985.
- It was declared as **Tiger Reserve in 2006**.
- The park is the breeding ground of iconic **Greater one-horned rhinoceros, elephants, wild water buffalo, and swamp deer**.
- It is recognized as an **Important Bird Area by BirdLife International** for the conservation of avifaunal species.
- The vast expanse of **tall elephant grass, marshland, and dense tropical moist broadleaf forests** undoubtedly makes the park look beautiful but it's the presence of Brahmaputra River, which makes it look enigmatic.
- It consists of mainly four types of vegetation such as **alluvial inundated grasslands, alluvial savanna woodlands, tropical moist mixed deciduous forests, and tropical semi-evergreen forests**.
- **Kumbhi, Indian gooseberry, the cotton tree, and elephant Apple** are amongst the famous trees that can be seen in the park.
- The forest region of Kaziranga Park is **home to world's largest population** of Indian Rhinoceros.

8.8 PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT AMENDMENT RULES, 2021

Recently, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has notified the **Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021**.

Genesis

- Pollution due to **single use plastic items** has become an **important environmental challenge** confronting all countries.
- India is committed to take **action for mitigation of pollution** caused by littered Single Use Plastics.
- In the 4th United Nations Environment Assembly held in 2019, **India had piloted a resolution on addressing single-use plastic products pollution**, recognizing the urgent need for the global community to focus on this very important issue.

- The adoption of this resolution at **UNEA 4** was a **significant step**.

Plastic waste in India

- According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) report 2018-19, **3.3 million metric tonnes of plastic waste was generated in India** in 2018-19.
- The **total municipal solid waste generation is 55-65 million tonnes**; plastic waste is approximately 5-6 per cent of the total solid waste generated in the country.
- **Goa has the highest per capita plastic waste generation** at 60 grams per capita per day, which is nearly double of what Delhi generates (37 grams per capita per day).

Key Highlights of Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021

- The **manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of following single-use plastic**, including **polystyrene and expanded polystyrene**, commodities shall be prohibited with effect from the 1st July, 2022
 - Ear buds with plastic sticks, plastic sticks for balloons, plastic flags, candy sticks, ice-cream sticks, polystyrene (Thermocol) for decoration;
 - Plates, cups, glasses, cutlery such as forks, spoons, knives, straw, trays, wrapping or packing films around sweet boxes, invitation cards, and cigarette packets, plastic or PVC banners less than 100 micron, stirrers
- The thickness of plastic carry bags has been **increased from fifty microns to seventy five microns** with effect from 30th September, 2021 and to **one hundred and twenty microns** with effect from the 31st December, 2022.
- The plastic packaging waste shall be **collected and managed in an environmentally sustainable** way through the Extended Producer Responsibility of the Producer, importer and Brand owner (PIBO).
 - For effective implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility, the **Guidelines for Extended Producer Responsibility** being brought out have been given legal force through Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2021.
- In Rule 3 (na), (qa) & (va), (vb) & (vc) which specifies “non-woven plastic bag”, “Plastic waste processing”, “Single-use plastic commodity”, “Thermoset plastic” and “Thermoplastic” the following has been inserted:

- The “**non-woven plastic bag**” means a bag made up of plastic sheet or web structured fabric of entangled plastic fibers or filaments bonded together by mechanical or thermal or chemical means.
 - The “non-woven fabric” means a flat or tufted porous sheet that is made directly from plastic fibres, molten plastic or plastic films.
- The “**Plastic waste processing**” means any process by which plastic waste is handled for the purpose of reuse, recycling, co-processing or transformation into new products.
- The “**Single-use plastic commodity**” means a plastic item intended to be used once for the same purpose before being disposed of or recycled.
- The “**Thermoset plastic**” means a plastic which becomes irreversibly rigid when heated and hence cannot be remoulded into desired shape.
- “**Thermoplastic**” means a plastic which softens on heating and can be moulded into desired shape.
- It **prohibits identified single use plastic items** which have low utility and high littering potential **by 2022**.

8.9 FOUR INDIAN SITES GET RAMSAR RECOGNITION

Recently, the wetlands **Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary and Sultanpur National Park** from Haryana and **Thol Lake Wildlife Sanctuary and Wadhvana Wetland** from Gujarat have received **Ramsar site recognition**.

- The **46 Ramsar sites in India** include the Chilika Lake in Odisha, Keoladeo National Park in Rajasthan, Harike Lake in Punjab, Loktak Lake in Manipur and Wular Lake in Jammu and Kashmir.

Ramsar Convention on Wetlands

- The Convention on Wetlands is an **intergovernmental treaty** adopted on 2 February 1971 in the **Iranian city of Ramsar**.
- It is the first of the **modern global intergovernmental treaties** on the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.
- **All Parties to the Convention have the obligations** to include in the List at least one site that meets the criteria established by the Conference of the Parties.
- It is the intergovernmental treaty that provides the **framework for the conservation and wise use of wetlands** and their resources.

- The Ramsar Convention has adopted a very **inclusive definition of Wetlands**:
 - "Wetlands are **areas of marsh, fen, peatland or water, whether natural or artificial, permanent or temporary**, with water that is static or flowing, fresh, brackish or salt, including areas of marine water the depth of which at low tide does not exceed six metres".

Significance of Ramsar site recognition

- The Ramsar list aims to **conserve an international network of wetlands** that are important for sustaining biological diversity.
- It **manifests India's century old ethos of preserving natural habitats**, working towards flora and fauna protection, and building a greener planet.
- It aims at **sustaining human life through the maintenance of their ecosystem** components, processes and benefits.

Bhindawas Wildlife Sanctuary

- It is a **human-made freshwater wetland** and the largest one in Haryana.
- The sanctuary is used throughout the year as a **resting and roosting site by over 250 bird species**.
- It supports more than **10 globally threatened species** including the endangered Egyptian Vulture, Steppe Eagle, Pallas's Fish Eagle, and Black-bellied Tern.
- It was established as a **Bird Sanctuary by the Government of India** in 3rd June, 2009.

Sultanpur National Park

- It is located in **Gurgaon district of Haryana**.
- It supports more than **220 species of resident, winter migratory and local migratory waterbirds** at critical stages of their life cycles.
- More than **10 of these are globally threatened**, including the critically endangered sociable lapwing, and the endangered Egyptian Vulture, Saker Falcon, Pallas's Fish Eagle and Black-bellied Tern.

Thol Lake Wildlife Sanctuary

- It lies on the **Central Asian Flyway** and **supports more than 320 bird species**, including more than 30 threatened waterbird species.

- It is home to critically endangered **White-rumped Vulture and Sociable Lapwing; and the vulnerable Sarus Crane, Common Pochard and Lesser White-fronted Goose.**
- It is an **open water habitat surrounded by cropland, fallow land and scrubland**, which helps other mammals to co-exist.
- It is made up of a **reservoir that was created in 1912** as an irrigation tank when the Maharajas of Baroda (Gaekwads) ruled the region.
- **The lake, and the area around, was declared a sanctuary only in 1988**, as it is home to a large number of avian species.

Wadhvana Wetland

- It is important as it provides **wintering ground to migratory waterbirds**, including over 80 species that migrate on the Central Asian Flyway.
- They include some **threatened or near-threatened species** such as the endangered Pallas's fish-eagle, the vulnerable Common Pochard, and the near-threatened Dalmatian Pelican, Grey-headed Fish-eagle and Ferruginous Duck.

8.10 Project BOLD (Bamboo Oasis on Lands in Drought)

Recently, the **Project BOLD (Bamboo Oasis on Lands in Drought)** has received Indian Army's support in Leh.

Project BOLD?

- It is a unique initiative of **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)**.
- It is named as "**Bamboo Oasis on Lands in Drought**" (BOLD).
- It is the **first of its kind exercise in India** which was launched from the tribal village **NichlaMandwa** in Udaipur, **Rajasthan**.
- Under the project, **5000 saplings of special bamboo species i.e. Bambusa Tulda and Bambusa Polymorpha** have been planted over 16 acres approx. of vacant arid Gram Panchayat land.

Significance of Project BOLD

- It seeks to **create bamboo-based green patches** in arid and semi-arid land zones.
- It is aligned with Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's call for **reducing land degradation and preventing desertification** in the country.

- It has been launched as part of KVIC's "**Khadi Bamboo Festival**" to celebrate 75 years of independence "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav".
- The green patches of bamboo in **Gujarat, Leh-Ladakh region and Rajasthan** will help in reducing the land degradation percentage of the country.
- It will **benefit a large number of women and unemployed youths** in the region by connecting them to skill development programs.
- It will **create additional income for the local tribal population** while it will also support the local bamboo-based industries and thus boost the rural economy.

8.11 NEW ALGAL SPECIES WITH 'UMBRELLA HEAD' DISCOVERED FROM ANDAMAN AND NICOBAR ISLANDS

Recently, a group of botanists from Central University of Punjab, Bathinda (CUPB) have discovered an **algal species from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.

New Algal Species

- It is a **stunning bright green algae**, resembling an umbrella or a mushroom.
- It is **measured as small as 20 to 40 mm** and has grooves on its cap measuring **15 to 20mm in diameter**.
- It is named after the imaginary sea mermaid, **Acetabularia jalakanyakae**.
 - **Jalakanyakae** is a Sanskrit word that literally means a **mermaid**.
- It is **very primitive** and is a **single-cell organism**.
- Its characteristic feature is that its **nucleus forms a rhizoid structure**, which facilitates the **algae to attach itself to shallow rocks**.

Acetabularia?

- It is a **member of a very diverse group**, the green algae.
 - The other members of the same group that we will consider are **Oedogonium, Chlamydomonas and Cladophora**, all of which are quite different in form and structure.
- It has an **unusual structure by being large, unicellular and possessing features** that might be considered organs i.e. 'roots, stems and leaves'.
- The **single cell is attached to the substrate** by root-like cellular extensions.

- It is a **typical photoautotroph**, using the energy of **sunlight to synthesize carbohydrates from carbon dioxide** and then using the carbohydrates as an energy source in cellular respiration.
- It is generally found in **warm, marine waters**.

8.12 ARID AMERICAS: ARE PANTANAL, COLORADO IN A 'POST-DROUGHT' STAGE

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released its first report since 2013 and confirmed that the march of climate change was on.

- The **Pantanal wetland in central South America** and the Colorado river basin in the southwestern United States have been in the spotlight in the past few years.

Highlights of the report:

- The year 2021 has seen a tumultuous summer so far as heatwaves, wildfires and extreme precipitation have hit various parts of the globe.
- The Pantanal has been **affected by the worst drought** in the past 50 years.
- The drought was caused because of a **phenomenon known as 'atmospheric blocking'**.

Pantanal:

- The Pantanal is the **largest tropical wetland** and one of the **most pristine in the world**.
- The Pantanal comprises about **3% of the entire world's wetlands**.
- It is located in south-central Brazil, sprawls across **three South American countries**– Bolivia, Brazil and Paraguay.
- The Pantanal is home to about 3,500 plant species, 656 bird species, 325 fish species, 159 mammals, 53 amphibians and 98 reptiles with the largest concentration of crocodiles in the world.
- The Pantanal is also home to the biggest parrot on the planet, the hyacinth macaw.
- The Pantanal Conservation area—a group of four protected areas in the Pantanal—was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to its ecological significance.

8.13 FORUM FOR DECARBONIZING TRANSPORT IN INDIA



SEPTEMBER 2021



Recently, the **NITI Aayog** and **World Resources Institute (WRI)-India**, jointly launched the '**Forum for Decarbonizing Transport**' in India as part of the **NDC-Transport Initiative for Asia (NDC-TIA)** project.

Genesis

- India has a **massive and diverse transport sector**, which is also the third most CO₂ emitting sector.
- The data from **International Energy Agency (IEA)** suggests that within the transport sector, road transport contributes to more than 90% of the total CO₂ emissions.
- The Government of India is **continuously working towards the decarbonisation of road transport**, with a major focus on the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) in the country.
- India has a great opportunity to **decarbonize its urban transport sector** through promotion of walking, cycling and public transport coupled with electrification of motor vehicles.

Highlights

- The forum will work in **close coordination with all the stakeholders** to formulate strategies and develop appropriate business models to accelerate electric mobility in India.
- The forum will provide a **platform to initiate dialogues for the development of uniform policies** and help achieve specific results in reducing emissions from the transport sector.
- The forum will bring together **CEOs, researchers, academics, multilateral agencies, financial institutions** as well as the Central and state government on a common platform.
- The forum will help in the **development of innovative business models** resulting in targeted results and the holistic growth of the electric mobility space in India.

NDC-Transport Initiative for Asia (NDC-TIA) project

- It is a **joint programme of seven organisations** that will engage **China, India, and Vietnam** in promoting a comprehensive approach to decarbonizing transport in their respective countries.
- It is part of the **International Climate Initiative (IKI)**.
- The **Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU)** support the initiative on the basis of a decision adopted by the German Bundestag.
- **NITI Aayog is the implementing partner** for the India component of the project.

- It is funded by the **International Climate Initiative (IKI)** of the **German Ministry** for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU).

Significance of NDC-TIA

- It aims at **bringing down the peak level of GHG emissions** (transport sector) in Asia (in line with a well below 2-degree pathway), resulting in problems like congestion and air pollution.
- It focuses on **developing a coherent strategy of effective policies** and the formation of a multi-stakeholder platform for decarbonizing transport in the country.

It aims to facilitate a **paradigm shift to zero-emission transport** across Asia.

8.14 INDIA ON COURSE TO EXCEED PARIS CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITMENTS

Recently, the Union Minister of Power has delivered keynote address at the '**India-ISA Energy Transition Dialogue 2021**'.

Highlights of INDIA-ISA Energy Transition Dialogue 2021

- India has achieved **emission reduction of 28% over 2005 levels**, against the **target of 35% by 2030** committed in its NDC (Nationally determined contributions).
 - It makes India among one of the few countries globally which has kept to its **Paris Climate Change (COP21)** commitments along with an exponential increase in renewable energy capacity.
- The Indian Power Sector has achieved the coveted milestone of **100 GW of installed Renewable Energy Capacity**.
 - While 100 GW of capacity has been installed and operationalized, **50 GW of additional capacity is under installation** and another **27 GW is under tendering process**.
- **38.5% of India's installed power generation capacity** is based on clean renewable energy sources and with this pace we will reach the **target of 40% by 2023**.
- India stands at **4th position in the world** in terms of installed RE capacity **5th in Solar** and **4th in Wind energy capacity**.
 - India plans to continue its momentum in the clean energy sector by **systematically scaling up its targets to install 450 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030** from its existing target of 175 GW by 2022.

What are Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)?

- The NDCs are at the heart of the **Paris Agreement** and the achievement of these long-term goals.
- The NDCs embody efforts by each country to **reduce national emissions** and adapt to the impacts of climate change.
- The Paris Agreement (Article 4, paragraph 2) requires each Party to **prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions (NDCs)** that it intends to achieve.
- It represent pledges on climate action that **seek to limit global warming** to well below 2°C, preferably to 1.5 °C, over pre-industrial levels.

Salient features of India's INDC

- To put forward and further **propagate a healthy and sustainable way of living** based on traditions and values of conservation and moderation.
- To adopt a **climate-friendly and a cleaner path** than the one followed hitherto by others at corresponding level of economic development.
- To reduce the emissions intensity of its GDP by **33 to 35 per cent by 2030** from 2005 level.
- To achieve about **40 per cent cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel** based energy resources by 2030, with the help of transfer of technology and low cost international finance, including from Green Climate Fund.
- To create an additional **carbon sink of 2.5 to 3 billion tonnes of CO₂** equivalent through additional forest and tree cover by 2030.
- To better adapt to climate change by **enhancing investments in development programmes in sectors vulnerable to climate change**, particularly agriculture, water resources, Himalayan region, coastal regions, health and disaster management.
- To mobilize domestic and new and additional funds from developed countries to **implement the above mitigation and adaptation actions** in view of the resource required and the resource gap.
- To build capacities, **create domestic framework and international architecture** for quick diffusion of cutting edge climate technology in India and for joint collaborative R&D for such future technologies.

8.15 CLIMATE CHANGE: CHILDREN AT RISK

Recently, the **United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)** has released the **Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI)**.

Children's Climate Risk Index?

- The **climate crisis is a child rights crisis** presents the Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI).
- It uses data to **generate new global evidence** on how many children are currently exposed to climate and environmental hazards, shocks and stresses.
- It is a **composite index** which brings together geographical data by analyzing the exposure to climate and environmental hazards, shocks and stresses and child vulnerability.
- It helps to **understand and measure the likelihood of climate and environmental shocks** or stresses leading to the:
 - Erosion of development progress; and
 - Deepening of deprivation and/or humanitarian situations affecting children or vulnerable households and groups
- It provides the **first comprehensive view of children's exposure and vulnerability to the impacts of climate change** to help prioritize action for those most at risk and ultimately ensure today's children inherit a liveable planet.

India's position in Children's Climate Risk Index

- India is among **four South Asian countries** where **children are most at risk** of the impacts of climate change threatening their health, education, and protection.
- The index has placed **India as one of the 33 extremely high-risk countries** with **flooding and air pollution** being the repeated environmental shocks.
- It is estimated that **more than 600 million Indians** will face '**acute water shortages**' in the coming years.
- It stated that **twenty-one of the world's 30 cities** with the most polluted air in 2020 were in India.

Key Global Highlights under Children's Climate Risk Index

- It stated that, approximately **1 billion children (nearly half of the world's children)** live in extremely high-risk countries.
- It found that:

- 1 billion children are “highly exposed” to exceedingly **high levels of air pollution**;
- 920 million to **water scarcity**;
- 820 million to **heat waves**;
- 815 million to **lead pollution**;
- 600 million to **vector-borne diseases**;
- 400 million to **tropical storms**;
- 330 million to **riverine flooding**; and
- 240 million to **coastal flooding**
- The **33 extremely high-risk countries** for children such as the **Central African Republic, Chad, Nigeria, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau**, collectively are responsible for a **mere nine percent of global carbon dioxide emissions**.
- **Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and India** are among four South Asian countries where children are at extremely high risk of the impacts of the climate crisis, with a ranking of **14th, 15th, 25th and 26th** respectively.
- India’s neighbours **Nepal is ranked 51st** and **Sri Lanka 61st** whereas **Bhutan is ranked 111th**, with children at relatively lower risk.

Road Ahead

- It calls on governments and businesses to **protect children from the climate crisis** not only by reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but also by:
 - **Increasing investments** in health and hygiene services, education and clean water;
 - Providing children with **climate education and green skills**;
 - **Including young people** in climate negotiations and decision making; and
 - Ensuring a “**green, low-carbon and inclusive**” COVID-19 recovery
- It stated that investments that **reduce exposure to water scarcity** can considerably reduce overall climate risk for 120 million children.
- It also provided that investments that **reduce exposure to coastal flooding** can considerably reduce overall climate risk for 525 million children.
- Improving access to social protection requires **working towards universal coverage of child and family benefits** as well as ensuring that social protection systems provide connections to other vital services in health, education and nutrition as well as the social welfare workforce.

- Improved education which builds knowledge and skills will contribute to **improved sustainability practices and a reduction in emissions** at the individual, institutional and communal levels.

8.16 HABITAT OF BIRD THAT FLIES NON-STOP FOR 5 DAYS FROM JAPAN TO AUSTRALIA UNDER THREAT

Recently, the **Latham's Snipe** flies non-stop for 5 days from Japan to Australia, but now its habitat is under threat.

Latham's Snipe

- It is a **long-billed skulking shorebird** of muddy edges in freshwater wetlands.
- It is the **largest snipe in Australia**, with cryptic, mainly brown, plumage.
- It **breeds in Japan** and spends the **non-breeding** season mainly in **eastern Australia**.
- It is a **shy, secretive bird** that is generally widely dispersed in low numbers across wetland and grassland areas.
- It is listed as '**Least Concern**' under the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Distribution and Habitat of Latham's Snipe

- It is a **non-breeding migrant to the south east of Australia** including Tasmania, passing through the north and New Guinea on passage.
- Latham's Snipe **breed in Japan** and on the **East Asian mainland**.
- Latham's Snipe are seen in **small groups or singly in freshwater wetlands** on or near the coast, generally among dense cover.
- They are found in any **vegetation around wetlands, in sedges, grasses, lignum, reeds and rushes** and also in saltmarsh and creek edges on migration.
- They also use **crops and pasture**.