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GENERAL STUDIES – 1

Topics: Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

1. ‘Adopt a Heritage’ project:

Context:
So far, under the project, 27 Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) have been awarded to 12 Monument Mitras for twenty-five (25) sites and two (2) Technological interventions across India.

Adopt a Heritage Project:
The Scheme was launched on World Tourism Day i.e. 27th September, 2017.

- This project is a key initiative of Ministry of Tourism in close collaboration with Ministry of Culture and Archeological Survey of India (ASI), to develop the heritage sites / monuments and making them tourist-friendly to enhance the tourism potential and their cultural importance in a planned and phased manner.

How it works?
The project plans to entrust heritage sites/monuments and other tourist sites to private sector companies, public sector companies and individuals for the development of tourist amenities. The project aims to develop synergy among all partners.

Who are Monument Mitras?
Successful bidders selected for adopting heritage sites / monuments by the Oversight and Vision Committee shall be called as Monument Mitras. The basic and advanced amenities of the tourist destinations would be provided by them.

- They would also look after the operations and the maintenance of the amenities. The ‘Monument Mitras’ would associate pride with their CSR activities.

Significance of this project:
Adopt a Heritage project is meant to address the challenges that the Archaeological Survey of India and other government bodies are facing in operating tourism infrastructure at heritage sites.

- By allowing private players to build, operate and maintain “tourist-friendly” and “world class amenities at these sites, the expectation is that the project will boost domestic and international tourism.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About the Project.
2. When was it launched?
3. Run by?

Mains Link:
4. Important heritage sites covered.
5. Who are Monument Mitra’s?

Discuss the significance of the scheme.

Topics: Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present—significant events, personalities, issues.

1. 1761 Battle of Panipat:

Context:
Manoj Dani, an independent U.S.-based researcher of art history, has assimilated rare paintings pertaining to the battle and its key players in a work titled Battle of Panipat: In Light of Rediscovered Paintings.

- The book contains rare paintings from the Bibliothèque nationale de France (BnF), the British Library, the National Museum in Delhi, Bonhams of U.K. and the Pune-based Bharat Itihas Sanshodak Mandal (BISM).

What does the book tell about the battle?
There are a myriad of myths surrounding Panipat. Far from a well-established narrative of this pivotal event, we have only scratched the surface of this crucial episode, and that whatever we know is only from a handful or selected sources of dubious veracity.

- The paintings depict key players such as Ahmad Shah Abdali, Sadashivrao Bhau, Najib Khan Rohilla, Dattaji Shinde, Vishwas Rao, Suraj Mal Jat and other Maratha, Afghan, Rohilla and Jat chiefs.
- The book deftly weaves analysis from original archival sources, casting a revealing light on the shifting alliances of 18th century Indian politics.

**Background:**

Two other major battles had been fought on the Panipat plains:

1. The **First Battle of Panipat, in 1526**, laid the foundation of the Mughal Empire in India after its first ruler, Babur, ended the Delhi Sultanate, which at the time was led by the Lodi dynasty.
2. The **Second Battle of Panipat, in 1556**, cemented Mughal rule when Akbar fought off a threat from the king Hemu ‘Vikramaditya’.

**About the Third Battle of Panipat, fought in 1761:**

- Fought between Maratha forces and invading armies of Afghan general Ahmed Shah Abdali of Durrani Empire in 1761.
- Abdali was supported by two Indian allies— the Rohillas Najib-ud-daulah, Afghans of the Doab region and Shuja-ud-Daula- the Nawab of Awadh.

**How it started?**

1. After the death of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, there was a sudden rise of the Marathas. The Marathas reversed all his territorial gains in the Deccan and conquered a considerable part of India.
2. The decline was hastened by the invasion of India by Nader Shah, who also took away Takht-i-Taus (the Peacock Throne) and the Kohinoor Diamond in 1739.
3. Abdali planned to attack the Marathas when his son was driven out of Lahore.
4. By the end of 1759, Abdali with his Afghan tribes reached Lahore as well as Delhi and defeated the smaller enemy garrisons.
5. The two armies fought at Karnal and Kunjpura where the entire Afghan garrison was killed or enslaved.
6. The massacre of the Kunjpura garrison infuriated Durrani to such an extent that he ordered for crossing the river at all costs to attack the Marathas.
7. Smaller battles continued through months and forces from both the sides amassed for the final assault. But food was running out for the Marathas.

**Outcomes:**

1. The Marathas were defeated in the battle, with 40,000 of their troops killed, while Abdali’s army is estimated to have suffered around 20,000 casualties.
2. It marked a loss of prestige for the Marathas, who lost their preeminent position in north India after this war, paving the way for British colonial power to expand here.
3. The Marathas lost some of their most important generals and administrators, including Sadashivrao and heir-apparent Vishwasrao of the Peshwa household, Ibrahim Khan Gardi, Jankojirao Scindia, and Yashwantrao Puar.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. About the third battle of Panipat.
2. Key players in the battle.
3. Causes.
4. Outcomes.
5. Who was Shuja-ud-Daula?
6. About the first and second battles of Panipat.

**Mains Link:**
Write a note on causes and outcomes of the third battle of Panipat.

Topics: The Freedom Struggle – its various stages and important contributors/contributions from different parts of the country.

1. Who was Khudiram Bose?

Context:
Union Home Minister Amit Shah recently visited the native village of Bengali revolutionary Khudiram Bose in Midnapore, West Bengal.

Who was Khudiram Bose? Events he is associated with:
- **Born in 1889**, Bose is highly regarded in Bengal for his fearless spirit.
- Unlike other leaders like Subhash Chandra Bose, however, Khudiram’s legacy has been largely limited to Bengal.
- In 1905, when Bengal was partitioned, he actively participated in protests against the British.
- At the age of 15, Bose joined the Anushilan Samiti, an early 20th century organisation that propounded revolutionary activities in Bengal.
- The deciding moment of Bose’s life came in 1908 when he along with another revolutionary, Prafulla Chaki were assigned the task of assassinating the district magistrate of Muzaffarpur, Kingsford.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Who was Khudiram Bose?
2. Who was Prafulla Chaki?
3. About Anushilan Samiti.

4. Why was Magistrate Kingsford assassinated?
   Link: https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-who-was-khudiram-bose-7111682/.

Topics: Post-independence consolidation and reorganization within the country.

1. Vijay Diwas 2020:

Context:
Vijay Diwas or Victory Day is celebrated in India every year on December 16 to commemorate the victory of the Indian armed forces over Pakistan in the 1971 Indo-Pak War, also known as the Bangladesh Liberation War.
- The India-Pakistan war began on December 16, 1971. It was one of the shortest wars (13 days) but saw one of the biggest surrenders.

India’s role in Bangladesh’s creation:
The 13-day Indo-Pak War was sparked by the rebellion in erstwhile East Pakistan against the government in Islamabad.
- Since March 1971, Bengali nationalists had been fighting a brutal crackdown by Pakistani forces on the civil and political rights of the Bengali population.
- Then Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had provided support to the Bangladesh cause for months but the Indian military formally engaged in a full-scale war with Pakistan on December 3.
- Soon, foreign pressure to end the war and mounting losses forced Islamabad to accept defeat, thereby granting Bangladesh full independence.

Key outcomes:
- Unilateral and unconditional surrender of the Pakistan Army and subsequent secession of East Pakistan into Bangladesh.
- It was the first war after World War II that India had won conclusively.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About Vijay Diwas.
2. Significance.
3. Bangladesh Liberation war.

4. Operation trident.

Mains Link:
Write a note on Bangladesh Liberation war.
**Topics: Women and women related issues.**

1. Why women’s rights activists’ criticised Maharashtra’s proposed laws against sexual offences?

**Context:**
The Maharashtra Shakti Bill, 2020, and the Special Court and Machinery for Implementation of Maharashtra Shakti Criminal Law, 2020 have been criticised by prominent women’s rights advocates for being “draconian” and “anti-women”.

- The activists have said that the two Bills (framed on the lines of The Andhra Pradesh Disha Act, 2019) should have been discussed with lawyers, activists, and academics working on women’s issues before they were passed by the state Cabinet.

**What are the concerns?**
- An amendment has been proposed to Section 375 (rape) of the IPC, to add an “explanation” that says that in cases where parties are adults and their conduct suggest there was “consent or implied consent”, a presumption of consent will be made. This, the activists say, “feeds into the patriarchal construct of consent and conduct of women”.
- Section 12 of The Special Courts and Machinery for the Implementation of Shakti Act, 2020, will punish the filing of false complaints. This, according to the signatories, “perpetuates the patriarchal notions of viewing women with suspicion, as unworthy of being believed” — and will deter victims from reporting sexual offences.
- Besides, the 15 days’ time-frame will not be sufficient for gathering all evidence and will become an excuse for police to not conduct a proper investigation. A hurried investigation and trial, they said, is likely to lead to miscarriage of justice.
- Also, the death penalty in the new law reduces both the reporting of sexual offences and of conviction rates.

**InstaLinks:**
**Prelims Link and Mains Link:**
- Since these are state-specific legislations, just have a brief overview of these Bills, key Provisions and concerns.

2. Plea in SC for uniform divorce, alimony rules:

**Context:**
The Supreme Court has agreed to examine a plea to frame uniform guidelines on divorce, maintenance and alimony for all religions.

**Need for:**
A petition was filed in the court that argued divorce, maintenance and alimony laws in certain religions discriminated and marginalised women.

- These anomalies, varying from one religion to another, were violative of the right to equality (Article 14 of the Constitution) and right against discrimination (Article 15) on the basis of religion and gender and right to dignity.
- Therefore, the laws on divorce, maintenance and alimony should be “gender-neutral and religion-neutral”.

**Status of Personal Law in India:**
Personal law subjects like marriage, divorce, inheritance come under Concurrent list.

- Hindu personal laws have been by and large secularized and modernized by statutory enactments (The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955).
- On the other hand, Muslim personal laws are still primarily unmodified and traditional in their content and approach (Eg: Shariat law of 1937).
- Apart from it, Christians and Jews are also governed by different personal laws.

**Article 142:**
[www.insightsonindia.com](http://www.insightsonindia.com)
Article 142 “provide(s) a unique power to the Supreme Court, to do “complete justice” between the parties, i.e., where at times law or statute may not provide a remedy, the Court can extend itself to put a quietus to a dispute in a manner which would befit the facts of the case.

Alimony:
Section 125 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, which applies to all communities lays down the provision for maintenance of wives, children, and parents if they do not earn enough and reasonable means to maintain themselves, or suffer from any physical or mental incapacity. Under this section, even a wife who has not divorced her husband has the right to get maintenance from her husband.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link: 1. What is Uniform Civil Code?
2. About Articles 13, 14 and 19.
4. Article 142 is related to?
5. 7th schedule of the Indian Constitution.

Mains Link: Discuss the need for having uniform guidelines on divorce, maintenance and alimony for all religions.

Topics: Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, Tsunami, Volcanic activity, cyclone etc., geographical features and their location- changes in critical geographical features (including water-bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes.

1. Why Cyclone Burevi will not be as strong as Cyclone Nivar?

Context:
Seven days after Cyclone Nivar hit the Karaikal coast, another cyclone, Burevi, named by the Maldives, is expected to cross Tamil Nadu’s southernmost district of Kanyakumari later this week.

- This is the third cyclone formed within the last 10 days in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, put together.

Will Cyclone Burevi be as strong as Cyclone Nivar?
Due to upwelling caused by Nivar, Cyclone Burevi will have limited intensity.

- When such consecutive systems develop in the same region of the ocean, the predecessor system leads to upwelling -- the process in which cooler waters from lower ocean surfaces are pushed towards upper ocean surfaces.
- In the absence of warm sea surface conditions, any cyclone, in this case Burevi, will not get enough fuel to intensify further while at sea.

What is a cyclone?
Tropical Cyclone is any large system of winds that circulates about a center of low atmospheric pressure in a counter-clockwise direction north of the Equator and in a clockwise direction to the south.

Insta Links:
Prelims Link: 1. List of names given by India.
2. What is a cyclone called in different regions?
3. Favourable conditions for a cyclone to occur?

4. How its intensity varies on land?
5. Why eastern coast cyclones are more intense?

Mains Link:
What are Cyclones? How are they named? Discuss.
2. How Mount Everest got 3 feet higher, endorsed by both Nepal and China?

Context:
The Foreign Ministers of Nepal and China jointly certified the elevation of Mount Everest at 8,848.86 metres above sea level 86 cm higher than what was recognised since 1954.

About Mount Everest:
- Mount Everest rises from the border between Nepal and China.
- Everest is also known as Sagarmatha in Nepal and Mount Qomolangma in China.

Background:
No other mountain has perhaps been the subject of as much debate. Over the years, there have been debates on issues like whether it should be “rock height”, or whether the snow cladding it, too, should be accounted for.

How and when was the earlier measurement of 8,848 m done?
- Earlier measurement was determined by the Survey of India in 1954, using instruments like theodolites and chains, with GPS still decades away. The elevation of 8,848 m came to be accepted in all references worldwide except by China.
- In 1999, a US team put the elevation at 29,035 feet (nearly 8,850 m).

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Location of Mount Everest.
2. Tallest mountains in the world.
3. Differences between GPS and GLONASS.
4. What are fold mountains?

Mains Link:
Discuss the significance of Himalayas for India.
Link:

3. Why parts of the US may be able to see the Northern Lights today?

Context:
The Northern Lights, also known as aurora borealis, are usually witnessed far up in the polar regions or the high latitude regions of Europe. But, today, they could be visible in parts of Illinois and Pennsylvania in the US.

Why?
This is happening due to a solar flare, which emerged from a Sunspot. The flare is accompanied by a Coronal Mass Ejection (CME) — a large bubble of radiation and particles emitted by the Sun that explodes into space at high speed. This causes the Northern Lights to be visible in more number of areas than usual.

What is Aurora?
An Aurora is a display of light in the sky predominantly seen in the high latitude regions (Arctic and Antarctic). It is also known as a Polar light.

Types:
There are two types- the aurora borealis and aurora australis – often called the northern lights and southern lights.

Where do they occur?
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They commonly occur at high northern and southern latitudes, less frequent at mid-latitudes, and seldom seen near the equator.

Colors:
While usually a milky greenish color, auroras can also show red, blue, violet, pink, and white. These colors appear in a variety of continuously changing shapes.

Science behind their occurrence:
● Auroras are a spectacular sign that our planet is electrically connected to the Sun. These light shows are provoked by energy from the Sun and fueled by electrically charged particles trapped in Earth’s magnetic field.
● The typical aurora is caused by collisions between fast-moving electrons from space with the oxygen and nitrogen in Earth’s upper atmosphere.
● The electrons—which come from the Earth’s magnetosphere, the region of space controlled by Earth’s magnetic field — transfer their energy to the oxygen and nitrogen atoms and molecules, making them “excited”.
● As the gases return to their normal state, they emit photons, small bursts of energy in the form of light.
● When a large number of electrons come from the magnetosphere to bombard the atmosphere, the oxygen and nitrogen can emit enough light for the eye to detect, giving us beautiful auroral displays.

Where do they origin?
They origin at altitudes of 100 to more than 400 km.

Why do auroras come in different colors and shapes?
1. The color of the aurora depends on which gas — oxygen or nitrogen — is being excited by the electrons, and on how excited it becomes. The color also depends upon how fast the electrons are moving, or how much energy they have at the time of their collisions.
2. High energy electrons cause oxygen to emit green light (the most familiar color of the aurora), while low energy electrons cause a red light. Nitrogen generally gives off a blue light.
3. The blending of these colors can also lead to purples, pinks, and whites. The oxygen and nitrogen also emit ultraviolet light, which can be detected by special cameras on satellites.

Effects:
● Auroras affect communication lines, radio lines and power lines.
● It should also be noted here that Sun’s energy, in the form of solar wind, is behind the whole process.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. What are auroras?
2. Types?
3. How are they formed?
4. Effects.
5. What are Solar flares?
6. What is Coronal Mass Ejection (CME)?

Mains Link:
Discuss the mechanism behind the formation of Auroras.

4. Not all Indian droughts are caused by El Nino:

Context:
As per latest findings, nearly six out of 10 droughts, in non-El Nino years, that occurred during the Indian summer-monsoon season in the past century may have been driven by atmospheric disturbances from the North Atlantic region.

- In 2014, India saw a 14% rainfall deficit — or a drought — that wasn’t linked to El Nino and before that in 1986 and 1985.

Factors that influence these droughts:
- These droughts are a consequence of a sudden and steep drop in rainfall in late August.
- Winds in the upper atmosphere are interacting with a deep cyclonic circulation above the abnormally cold North Atlantic waters. The resulting wave of air currents, called a Rossby wave, curved down from the North Atlantic squeezed in by the Tibetan plateau and hit the subcontinent around mid-August, suppressing rainfall and throwing off the monsoon that was trying to recover from the June slump.

What is El Nino?
- El Nino is a climatic cycle characterised by high air pressure in the Western Pacific and low air pressure in the eastern.
- During this event, there is a warming of the sea surface temperature in the eastern and central equatorial Pacific Ocean.
- It is one phase of an alternating cycle known as El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO).

What causes El Nino?
- El Nino sets in when there is anomaly in the pattern.
- The westward-blowing trade winds weaken along the Equator and due to changes in air pressure, the surface water moves eastwards to the coast of northern South America.
- The central and eastern Pacific regions warm up for over six months and result in an El Nino condition.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. What is El Nino?
2. What is La Nina?
3. What is ENSO?
4. When do these events occur?
5. Impact of ENSO on Asia, Africa and Australia.

Mains Link:
Discuss the impact of La Nina weather phenomenon on India.

Link:
https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G7482CU9C.1&imageview=0.

5. What is a Solar Eclipse?

Context:
The total solar eclipse on December 14, Monday will be the last eclipse of the year.
- Apart from Chile and Argentina, people living in southern parts of South America, south-west Africa and Antarctica will be able to witness a partial solar eclipse.

What is a Solar Eclipse?
It is a natural event that takes place on Earth when the Moon moves in its orbit between Earth and the Sun (this is also known as an occultation).
- It happens at New Moon, when the Sun and Moon are in conjunction with each other.
- During an eclipse, the Moon’s shadow (which is divided into two parts: the dark umbra and the lighter penumbra) moves across Earth’s surface.

Then, why isn’t there a solar eclipse every month?
If the Moon was only slightly closer to Earth, and orbited in the same plane and its orbit was circular, we would see eclipses each month. The lunar orbit is elliptical and tilted with respect to Earth’s orbit, so we can only see up to 5 eclipses per year. Depending on the geometry of the Sun, Moon and Earth, the Sun can be totally blocked, or it can be partially blocked.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
2. Types of Solar Eclipses.
3. Umbra vs Penumbra.
4. Moon’s orbit around the earth.
5. Why isn’t there a solar eclipse every month?

Mains Link:
Write a note on annular solar eclipse.

6. What makes the Geminids meteor shower unique?
Context:
The Geminids meteor shower, believed to be the strongest of the year, is active from December 4-December 20, with December 13 and 14 considered to be the best nights for viewing these meteor showers.

What are meteor showers?
- Meteors are bits of rock and ice that are ejected from comets as they manoeuvre around their orbits around the sun.
- Meteor showers are witnessed when Earth passes through the trail of debris left behind by a comet or an asteroid.

Why is the Geminid meteor shower considered to be the best of the year?
The Geminids meteor showers are unique because their origin does not lie in a comet, but what is believed to be an asteroid or an extinct comet. The Geminids emerge from 3200 Phaethon, which meteor scientists consider to be an asteroid. The asteroid is over 5 km in diameter and was named after the Greek myth of Phaethon, the son of Sun god Helios.
- According to NASA, the Geminids rate will be better this year because the shower’s peak overlaps with a nearly new moon, which means there will be darker skies and no moonlight to wash out the fainter meteors.

What Are The Differences Between An Asteroid, Comet, Meteoroid, Meteor and Meteorite?
1. Asteroid: A relatively small, inactive, rocky body orbiting the Sun.
2. Comet: A relatively small, at times active, object whose ices can vaporize in sunlight forming an atmosphere (coma) of dust and gas
and, sometimes, a tail of dust and/or gas.

3. Meteoroid: A small particle from a comet or asteroid orbiting the Sun.

4. Meteor: The light phenomena which results when a meteoroid enters the Earth’s atmosphere and vaporizes; a shooting star.

5. Meteorite: A meteoroid that survives its passage through the Earth’s atmosphere and lands upon the Earth’s surface.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. What is an Asteroid?
2. What is a comet?
3. What is coma?
4. Differences between Asteroid, Comet, Meteoroid, Meteor and Meteorite.

7. What is causing the dip in Delhi’s temperature?

Context:
Recently, a rapid decline in minimum temperature in Delhi was noted from 14.4 degrees Celsius to 4.1 degrees.

● The dip was five degrees below the normal temperature for this time of the year.

What is causing the dip in Delhi’s temperature?
● There has been a significant amount of snowfall over the past few days in states falling in the western Himalayan range Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand under the influence of a Western Disturbance.
● Snowfall in the western Himalayan range means cold, north-westerly winds blowing over Delhi from the direction of this high altitude area, and clearing of cloud cover with the passing of Western Disturbance, and leads to a fall in temperatures.
● The lack of cloud cover also leads to higher radiation from the Earth’s surface into the atmosphere at night time, which also cools the ground.
● Moreover, under the influence of an active La Niña climate pattern, temperatures across the globe have been dipping.

Background:
A Western Disturbance, labelled as an extra-tropical storm originating in the Mediterranean, is an area of low pressure that brings sudden showers, snow and fog in northwest India.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. What is a western disturbance?
2. What is ENSO oscillation?
3. Impact of La Niña on India.
4. What is a jet stream?
5. What are mango showers?

Link: [https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/delhi-temperature-winter-weather-forecast-7105762/](https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/delhi-temperature-winter-weather-forecast-7105762/)
GENERAL STUDIES – 2

Topics: Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure; Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries.

1. N.K. Singh calls for a fresh look at the Seventh Schedule:

Context:
Fifteenth Finance Commission chairman N.K. Singh has called for a fresh look at the Constitution’s Seventh Schedule, which forms the basis for allocating subjects to the Centre and States.

- This is necessary to give more flexibility to States in implementing centrally sponsored schemes and to reinforce trust in fiscal federalism.

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) has sought the inclusion of tourism in the concurrent list to enable the Centre and States to effectively regulate the sector as well as frame policies for growth.

Seventh Schedule:
The seventh schedule under Article 246 of the constitution deals with the division of powers between the union and the states.

It contains three lists- Union List, State List and Concurrent List.

- The union list details the subjects on which Parliament may make laws while the state list details those under the purview of state legislatures.

- The concurrent list on the other hand has subjects in which both Parliament and state legislatures have jurisdiction. However the Constitution provides federal supremacy to Parliament on concurrent list items in case of a conflict.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. What is 7th schedule?
2. Subjects under seventh Schedule.
3. Residuary powers.
4. What happens when there is a conflict between a central law and state law.

Mains Link:
Discuss the need for review of 7th schedule of the Indian Constitution.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G7482CKGR.1&imageview=0.

2. What is a review petition?

Context:
Activist-lawyer Prashant Bhushan has moved the Supreme Court seeking a direction that his two pleas, in which he has sought review of the orders convicting and sentencing him for contempt of court, be heard after adjudication of his separate petition raising the issue of right to appeal in such matter.

What is a review petition and when can it be filed?
A judgment of the Supreme Court becomes the law of the land, according to the Constitution. It is final because it provides certainty for deciding future cases.
However, the Constitution itself gives, under Article 137, the Supreme Court the power to review any of its judgments or orders. This departure from the Supreme Court’s final authority is entertained under specific, narrow grounds.
● So, when a review takes place, the law is that it is allowed not to take fresh stock of the case but to correct grave errors that have resulted in the miscarriage of justice.

When can a review petition be accepted?
In a 1975 ruling, Justice Krishna Iyer said a review can be accepted “only where a glaring omission or patent mistake or like grave error has crept in earlier by judicial fallibility”.

● A review is by no means an appeal in disguise. That means the Court is allowed not to take fresh stock of the case but to correct grave errors that have resulted in the miscarriage of justice.

Filing Review Petition:
● As per the Civil Procedure Code and the Supreme Court Rules, any person aggrieved by a ruling can seek a review. This implies that it is not necessary that only parties to a case can seek a review of the judgment.
● A Review Petition has to be filed within 30 days of the date of judgment or order.
● In certain circumstances, the court can condone the delay in filing the review petition if the petitioner can establish strong reasons that justify the delay.

The procedure to be followed:
1. The rules state that review petitions would ordinarily be entertained without oral arguments by lawyers. It is heard “through circulation” by the judges in their chambers.
2. Review petitions are also heard, as far as practicable, by the same combination of judges who delivered the order or judgment that is sought to be reviewed.
3. If a judge has retired or is unavailable, a replacement is made keeping in mind the seniority of judges.
4. In exceptional cases, the court allows an oral hearing. In a 2014 case, the Supreme Court held that review petitions in all death penalty cases will be heard in open court by a Bench of three judges.

Option after Review Petition Fails:
In Roopa Hurra v Ashok Hurra case (2002), the Court evolved the concept of a curative petition, which can be heard after a review petition is dismissed.

● A curative petition is also entertained on very narrow grounds like a review petition and is generally not granted an oral hearing.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Review vs Curative petition.
2. Procedure to be followed.
3. Who can file?
4. Time-period within which a review petition should be filed?
5. What is Section 497 of IPC?

Mains Link:
6. What is Article 137?

Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GRH82PO9R.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GRH82PO9R.1&imageview=0).

3. Overseas Citizens of India (OCI):
Context:
Recently, the High Court of Karnataka held that:

● Students under the Overseas Citizens of India (OCI) category are to be considered as “citizens of India” for admission to professional courses.

Background:
An appeal was filed by Karnataka state government against the April 2019 single-judge verdict, which had also allowed OCI students to seek admission to professional courses in the regular quota of seats. The state government wants to restrict their admission only under the NRI quota.

Who are OCI cardholders?
On 09 January 2015, the Government of India discontinued the PIO card and merged it with OCI card.

Eligibility:
Government of India allows the following categories of foreign nationals to apply for OCI Card.

Exceptions:
Anyone who is applying for OCI card should hold a valid Passport of another country.

- Individuals who do not have citizenship of any other country are not eligible to gain an OCI status.
- Individuals whose parents or grandparents hold citizenship of Pakistan and Bangladesh are not eligible to apply.

Benefits for OCI cardholders:
1. Lifelong Visa to visit India multiple times. (special permission needed for research work in India).
2. No need to register with Foreigners Regional Registration Officer (FRRO) or Foreigners Registration Officer (FRO) for any length of stay.
3. Except for acquisition of agricultural and plantation properties, OCI card holders have similar facilities that are extended to NRIs in economic, financial and educational fields.
4. Same treatment as of NRIs in respect to Inter-country adoption of Indian children.
5. Also treated at par with NRIs regarding – entry fees for national monuments, practice of professions like doctors, dentists, nurses, advocates, architects, Chartered Accountants & Pharmacists.
6. At par with NRIs to participate in All India Pre-medical tests and such.
7. Treated at par with Indian citizens in matters of traffic in airfares in Indian domestic sectors.
8. Same entry fee as for Indians for entry into India’s national parks and wildlife sanctuaries.
9. OCI booklet can be used as identification to avail services. An affidavit can be attached with local address as residential proof.

There are certain restrictions placed on OCI card holders:
1. Do not have right to vote.
2. Do not have right to any public service/government jobs
3. Cannot hold offices of – Prime Minister, President, Vice-President, Judge of Supreme Court and High Court, member of Parliament or Member of state legislative assembly or council.
4. Cannot own agricultural property.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Definition of Citizen.
2. POI vs OCI vs NRI.
3. Who can grant and revoke citizenship?
4. Dual citizenship in India.
5. Applicability of right to vote and contest in elections for OCI card holders.
6. Can OCI holders buy agricultural land?

Mains Link:
Who are overseas citizens of India? What are the benefits available for OCI card holders? Discuss.

Link:https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GRG82PRLD.1&imageview=0.
4. Maharashtra House resolution on Arnab Goswami and its face-off with judiciary:

Context:
Questioning the boundaries of the judiciary's powers, both Houses of the Maharashtra State Legislature have passed proposals stating that they will not take cognizance of or reply to any notice sent by the High Court or the Supreme Court in the Breach of Privilege motion against Republic TV editor and anchor Arnab Goswami.
- This has added a new twist to the debate over the separation of powers between the judiciary and legislature.

What is the doctrine of separation of power?
- The doctrine of separation of power is a part of the basic structure of the Indian Constitution, even though it is not specifically mentioned in its text.
- It implies that the three pillars of democracy, namely the executive, judiciary and legislature, perform separate functions and act as separate entities.
- One of the features of the doctrine is that one arm of the state should not interfere in the functioning of the other organs or exercise a function of another organ.

What legal provisions has the state assembly invoked while passing the proposal?
The proposal cites two articles of the constitution as the basis of its argument. They are:
- Article 194 of the Constitution, which lays down the powers and privileges of the Houses of Legislatures.
- Article 212 states that the validity of any proceedings in the Legislature of a State shall not be called in question on the ground of any alleged irregularity of procedure.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About Articles 194 and 212.
2. What is the doctrine of separation of power?

5. SC stays Andhra HC order to study ‘constitutional breakdown’ in State:

Context:
The Supreme Court has stayed an Andhra Pradesh High Court order intending to embark on a judicial enquiry into whether there is a constitutional breakdown in the State machinery under the Jagan Mohan Reddy government, requiring a declaration of President’s rule.

What’s the issue?
High Court, on October 1, while deciding habeas corpus petitions filed by relatives of persons remanded in judicial custody or on bail, had suo motu summoned the State counsel to assist it in deciding “whether in circumstances prevailing in the State of Andhra Pradesh, the court can record a finding that there is constitutional breakdown in the State or not”.

What has the Supreme Court said?
- It was not up to the High Court to enquire and recommend President’s rule in a State.
- It is Article 356 that deals with failure of constitutional machinery in a State. This is a power [to impose President’s rule] exclusively vests in the Executive.

Observation by the state government:
1. The High Court’s observation violated the Basic Structure doctrine of the Constitution.
2. The constitutional courts do not have any judicially discoverable and manageable standards to determine if there has been a constitutional breakdown.
3. This is a serious encroachment on the powers of the executive as enumerated under the Constitution and is thus violative of the doctrine of separation of powers.

www.insightsonindia.com 19 InsightsIAS
What is President’s Rule in the Indian context?

Article 356 of the Constitution of India gives President of India the power to suspend state government and impose President’s rule of any state in the country if “if he is satisfied that a situation has arisen in which the government of the state cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution”.

- Upon the imposition of this rule, there would be no Council of Ministers. The Vidhan Sabha is either dissolved or prorogued.
- The state will fall under the direct control of the Union government, and the Governor will continue to head the proceedings, representing the President of India – who is the Head of the State.
- The imposition of the President’s rule requires the sanction of both the houses of Parliament.
- If approved, it can go on for a period of six months. However, the imposition cannot be extended for more than three years, and needs to be brought before the two houses every six months for approval.

Revocation:

- A proclamation of President’s Rule may be revoked by the President at any time by a subsequent proclamation. Such a proclamation does not require parliamentary approval.

InstaLinks:

- Prelims Link:
  1. What is President's Rule?
  2. Article 356 is related to?
  3. How and when it is imposed?
  4. Revocation.
  5. The doctrine of separation of powers under the Indian Constitution.

- Mains Link:
  Discuss the issues associated with President’s Rule and the role of Governor of a state in recommending that.

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

1. Consent for Contempt:

What is the law on contempt of courts?

The Contempt of Courts Act 1971 defines civil and criminal contempt, and lays down the powers and procedures by which courts can penalise contempt, as well as the penalties that can be given for the offence of contempt.

- Contempt of court is the offense of being disobedient to or disrespectful toward a court of law and its officers in the form of behavior that opposes or defies the authority, justice and dignity of the court.

Why is the consent of the Attorney General required to initiate contempt proceedings?

The objective behind requiring the consent of the Attorney General before taking cognizance of a complaint is to save the time of the court.

- This is necessary because judicial time is squandered if frivolous petitions are made and the court is the first forum for bringing them in.
- The AG’s consent is meant to be a safeguard against frivolous petitions, as it is deemed that the AG, as an officer of the court, will independently ascertain whether the complaint is indeed valid.

Under what circumstances is the AG’s consent not needed?

The AG’s consent is mandatory when a private citizen wants to initiate a case of contempt of court against a person.

However, when the court itself initiates a contempt of court case the AG’s consent is not required.

- This is because the court is exercising its inherent powers under the Constitution to punish for contempt and such Constitutional powers cannot be restricted because the AG declined to grant consent.

What happens if the AG denies consent?

If the AG denies consent, the matter all but ends.
The complainant can, however, separately bring the issue to the notice of the court and urge the court to take suo motu cognizance.

- Article 129 of the Constitution gives the Supreme Court the power to initiate contempt cases on its own, independent of the motion brought before it by the AG or with the consent of the AG.

Insta Link:

Prelims Link:
1. Powers of SC vs HCs wrt Contempt cases.
2. Constitutional provisions in this regard.
4. Civil vs Criminal contempt.
5. Rights under Article 19.
6. Section 10 of The Contempt of Courts Act of 1971 is related to?

Mains Link:
Discuss how contempt cases are handled by Supreme Court in India.

Link: https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/consent-for-contempt-attorney-general-for-india-kk-venugopal-rachita-taneja/.

2. We won’t order any step that will hobble economy: SC:

Context:
The Supreme Court has orally said it would not pass any order that would risk the economy going “haywire”.

What’s the issue?
The Supreme Court is hearing the government’s response to separate pleas made by industry, real estate and power sectors and others for debt relief, including waiver of interest, during the moratorium.

- The Court said this after the Union government revealed that a blanket waiver of interest on debts incurred by all classes and categories of borrowers for the moratorium period would mean forgoing an estimated over ₹6 lakh crore.

Why is the Centre concerned?
1. A possible crippling of the banking sector was one of the main reasons for “not even contemplating waiver interest” and restricting relief to “deferment of payment of instalments”.
2. If the banks were to bear this burden, it would necessarily wipe out a substantial and a major part of their net worth, rendering most of the banks unviable and raising a very serious question mark over their very survival.
3. For every loan account, there were about 8.5 deposit accounts in the Indian banking system. Therefore, the government cannot do anything which would topple the economic scenario.

Various measures by the Government:
The Ministry of Finance, under the Disaster Management Act, and the RBI have acted proactively.
1. The government had sanctioned over ₹90,800-crore liquidity injection for the power distribution companies. This would enable them to pay their outstanding dues to power producers and transmission companies.
2. In the real estate sector, a government advisory was issued allowing the extension of registration and completion dates of projects under Real Estate Regulatory Authorities by treating COVID-19 as an event of force-majeure.
3. The government spelt relief for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector by launching an emergency credit line of up to ₹3 lakh crore, backed by 100% government guarantee to enable the MSMEs to get back to regular operations. A sum of ₹1.87 lakh crore had been sanctioned.
4. The resolution framework announced by the RBI took care of the apprehensions raised about the possible downgrading of loan accounts from standard to non-performing asset (NPA) and consequent impact on ratings.
5. The Securities and Exchange Board of India had issued circulars to relax the “recognition” of defaults committed during moratorium.
6. The Kamath Committee set up by the RBI has recommended financial parameters for debt restructuring of 26 sectors affected by COVID-19.
3. Supreme Court raps govt. on rising cost of COVID care:

Context:
Supreme Court recently passed its order on Covid 19 care by the Government.
- The court took note of the issue of the deteriorating health of fatigued doctors, nurses and medical workers.

Need for government’s intervention:
Medical care during the pandemic has become so costly that ordinary people cannot afford it at all.

Right to health (Article 21) includes affordable treatment. For whatever reasons, the treatment has become costlier and it is not affordable to the common people at all.
- Even if one survives from COVID-19, many times financially and economically he is finished.

What should the government do?
1. It is the government’s duty to ensure affordable medical treatment for COVID-19 patients.
3. The government should be transparent about the facts and figures regarding COVID-19 infection spread. Otherwise, the people will be misled and they will be under the impression that everything is alright and they will become negligent.
4. The government needs to work out a mechanism to give “intermittent rest” to the frontline workers.
5. States should consider a curfew on weekends/night.
6. In a micro containment zone or in an area where the number of cases are on the higher side, to cut the chain, they should be sealed.
7. There should be complete lockdown so far as such areas are concerned. Such containment areas need to be sealed for a few days except for essential services.
8. State and local authorities should either make more provisions for affordable treatment in their hospitals or there shall be cap on the fees charged by the private hospitals in exercise of the powers under the Disaster Management Act.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
3. What is DM Act?
4. Bodies established under this act.
5. Composition of NDMA.
7. What is a notified disaster?

Mains Link:
Discuss how the right to health as a Fundamental Right is being ensures in the Country.


4. HC orders ‘composite floor test’ in BTC:

Context:
The Gauhati High Court has ordered a “composite floor test” in Assam’s autonomous Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) on or before December 26.
- The BTC falls under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution and the governor is its constitutional head.

What’s the issue?
- Election to the 40 member council had resulted in fractured mandate with Bodoland People’s Front (BPF) emerging single largest party with 17 seats.
- However, BJP and United People’s Party Liberal (UPPL) supported by Gana Shakti Party (GSP) formed the government of council.

Following this, a petition was filed in the court.
What are Autonomous District Councils?
- As per the Sixth Schedule, the four states viz. Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram contain the Tribal Areas which are technically different from the Scheduled Areas.
- Though these areas fall within the executive authority of the state, provision has been made for the creation of the District Councils and regional councils for the exercise of the certain legislative and judicial powers.
- Each district is an autonomous district and Governor can modify / divide the boundaries of the said Tribal areas by notification.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. What is an autonomous district council?
2. Who constitutes them?
3. Powers and roles?
4. What are regional councils?
5. Composition of these councils?

Mains Link:
6. How many states are covered under 6th schedule of the Indian Constitution.

5. What the law says about a governor’s power to summon, prorogue or dissolve an assembly?

Context:
Kerala government to seek governor’s nod again for special assembly session to discuss farmer agitation.

Constitution on a governor’s power:
There are two provisions in the Constitution that deal with a governor’s power to summon, prorogue and dissolve an assembly.
Under Article 174, a governor shall summon the House at a time and place, as she or he thinks fit.
- Article 174 (2) (a) says a governor may from “time to time” prorogue the House and 174 (2) (b) allows her or him to dissolve the Legislative Assembly.

Article 163 says the governor shall exercise her or his functions with the aid and advice of the council of ministers. But it also adds that she or he would not need their advice if the Constitution requires her or him to carry out any function at her/his discretion.

What has the Supreme Court said?
A 2016 verdict of the Supreme Court in the Nabam Rebia case, which had resulted from a constitutional crisis in Arunachal Pradesh, had expressly stated that a “governor can summon, prorogue and dissolve the House, only on the aid and advice of the council of ministers”.
- But the court also clarified that if the governor had reasons to believe that the chief minister and her or his council of ministers have lost the confidence of the House, a floor test could be ordered.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
2. Is the Governor bound by the advice of the chief minister-led council of ministers when it comes to convening the assembly session?

Mains Link:
3. Who appoints Chief Minister?
4. Discretionary powers of Governor.
5. Tenure of governor.

6. Recusal of Judges:

Context:
Andhra High Court rejects plea for recusal of judge from hearing petitions filed against the proposed sale of government land in Guntur and Visakhapatnam districts under “Mission Build A.P.”

What is Judicial Disqualification or Recusal?
Judicial disqualification, referred to as recusal, is the act of abstaining from participation in an official action such as a legal proceeding due to a conflict of interest of the presiding court official or administrative officer.

**Grounds for Recusal:**
1. The judge is biased in favour of one party, or against another, or that a reasonable objective observer would think he might be.
2. Interest in the subject matter, or relationship with someone who is interested in it.
3. Background or experience, such as the judge’s prior work as a lawyer.
4. Personal knowledge about the parties or the facts of the case.
5. Ex parte communications with lawyers or non-lawyers.
6. Rulings, comments or conduct.

**Are there any laws in this regard?**
There are no definite rules on recusals by Judges.
- However, In taking oath of office, judges, both of the Supreme Court and of the high courts, promise to perform their duties, to deliver justice, “without fear or favour, affection or ill-will”.

**What has the Supreme Court said on this?**
Justice J. Chelameswar in his opinion in *Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India (2015)* held that “Where a judge has a pecuniary interest, no further inquiry as to whether there was a ‘real danger’ or ‘reasonable suspicion’ of bias is required to be undertaken”.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
2. Who administers oath to Supreme Court and High Court judges?
3. Articles 127 and 128 of the Indian Constitution are related to?

**Mains Link:**
Recusal has become a selective call of morality for Supreme Court judges. Discuss.

**Link:** https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GC184EF2I.1&imageview=0.

**Topics: Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries**

1. What is the ‘bribery for presidential pardon’ scheme unveiled by the US justice department?

**Context:**
The US Justice Department is investigating an alleged bribery scheme that was directing money to officials in the White House in exchange for a presidential pardon or commutation.

**What is the extent of the US President’s power to pardon?**
- US President has the constitutional right to pardon or commute sentences related to federal crimes.
- This power is granted without limit and cannot be restricted by Congress.
- Similarly, Clemency is a broad executive power, and is discretionary- meaning the President is not answerable for his pardons, and does not have to provide a reason for issuing one.

**Limitations:**
- This power cannot be exercised in cases of impeachment.
- The power only applies to federal crimes and not state crimes.

**Clemency powers of the Indian President under article 72:**
It says that the President 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.

**The President can exercise these powers:**
- In all cases where the punishment or sentence is by a court martial;
In all cases where the punishment or sentence is for an offence against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the Union extends;
In all cases where the sentence is a sentence of death.

Key facts:
1. This power of pardon shall be exercised by the President on the advice of Council of Ministers.
2. The constitution does not provide for any mechanism to question the legality of decisions of President or governors exercising mercy jurisdiction.
3. But the SC in Epuru Sudhakar case has given a small window for judicial review of the pardon powers of President and governors for the purpose of ruling out any arbitrariness.

InstaLinks:

Mains Link:
Present a detailed comparison of pardoning powers of president and Governor in India.

Topics: Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

1. MLC disqualified for being appointed as a Minister:

Context:
The Karnataka High Court has held that Vishwanath stands disqualified under the anti-defection law and hence cannot be inducted into the state cabinet.
- The High Court held that AH Vishwanath has incurred disqualification under Article 164(1B) and Article 361 B of the Indian Constitution.

Article 164(1B):
- It states that a member of Legislative Assembly of a State or either House of the Legislature of a State having Legislative Council, belonging to any political party, if disqualified as a member of the Assembly, shall also be disqualified to be appointed as a Minister for the period of their disqualification.

What's the issue?
A petition was filed in the court alleging that AH Vishwanath had been appointed as members of the Legislative Council for the sole purpose of making them ministers, despite the fact that Vishwanath had lost the bye-polls.
- The petitioner argued that he was still disqualified as per the Supreme Court judgement on November 19, which upheld former Assembly Speaker Ramesh Kumar’s orders for disqualification.
- The plea maintained that a disqualified member can become eligible to hold the position of a minister only if they win the bye-elections from the same constituency.

Background:
Article 361B- Disqualification for appointment on remunerative political post:
- A member of a House belonging to any political party who is disqualified for being a member of the House under paragraph 2 of the Tenth Schedule shall also be disqualified to hold any remunerative political post for duration of the period commencing from the date of his disqualification till the date on which the term of his office as such member would expire or till the date on which he contests an election to a House and is declared elected, whichever is earlier.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Article 361B.
2. Article 164(1B).
3. Tenth schedule of Indian Constitution.
4. Suspension of MLAs and MPs- powers and procedures. **Mains Link:** Discuss the need for and significance of the 10th schedule of the Indian Constitution.

Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GB5814F8Q.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GB5814F8Q.1&imageview=0)

2. MP Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS):

**Context:**
Members of all parties have unanimously asked the government to release funds for the projects sanctioned in 2018 and 2019, which were under way before the funds were suspended due the COVID-19 pandemic.

- In their representations, the MPs had argued that the funds become more critical during the pandemic.

**Background:**
The Union government had resorted to Disaster Management Act to suspend the member of Parliament local area development (MPLAD) scheme in April this year.

**About MPLAD scheme:**
- Launched in December, 1993.
- Seeks to provide a mechanism for the Members of Parliament to recommend works of developmental nature for creation of durable community assets and for provision of basic facilities including community infrastructure, based on locally felt needs.
- The MPLAD is a Plan Scheme fully funded by Government of India.
- The annual MPLADS fund entitlement per MP constituency is Rs. 5 crore.

**Special focus:**
- MPs are to recommend every year, works costing at least 15 per cent of the MPLADS entitlement for the year for areas inhabited by Scheduled Caste population and 7.5 per cent for areas inhabited by S.T. population.
- In order to encourage trusts and societies for the betterment of tribal people, a ceiling of Rs. 75 lakh is stipulated for building assets by trusts and societies subject to conditions prescribed in the scheme guidelines.

**Release of Funds:**
- Funds are released in the form of grants in-aid directly to the district authorities.
- The funds released under the scheme are non-lapsable.
- The liability of funds not released in a particular year is carried forward to the subsequent years, subject to eligibility.
- The MPs have a recommendatory role under the scheme.
- The district authority is empowered to examine the eligibility of works, sanction funds and select the implementing agencies, prioritise works, supervise overall execution, and monitor the scheme at the ground level.
- At least 10% of the projects under implementation in the district are to be inspected every year by the district authority.

**Recommendation of works:**
- The Lok Sabha Members can recommend works in their respective constituencies.
- The elected members of the Rajya Sabha can recommend works anywhere in the state from which they are elected.
- Nominated members of the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha may select works for implementation anywhere in the country.

**InstaLinks:**
1. How is MPLADS connected to Sansad Adarsh Gram Yojana?
2. Where can nominated MPs recommend their works?

3. Is there any special focus on SC and ST Welfare?

4. Difference between grants and loans?

5. Implementing agencies.

Mains Link: Critically examine whether MPLADS has helped in bridging the gaps in provisioning of public services?

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G1S82MA8B.1&imageview=0.

3. Can states refuse to implement Central laws?

Context:
Delhi Assembly passes resolution rejecting agricultural laws.

- Meanwhile, the Supreme Court has said farmers have a constitutional right to continue with their “absolutely perfect” protest as long as their dissent against the controversial agricultural laws did not slip into violence.

What’s the main issue here?
Experts argue, the three agriculture laws are a clear infringement on the states’ right to legislate.

- The main subjects of the three acts are agriculture and market that are essentially state subjects as per the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.
- However, the Central government finagled its way into the legislation by misconstruing its authority on food items, a subject in the Concurrent List, as authority over the subject agriculture.
- However, food items and agricultural products are distinct categories as many agricultural products in their raw forms are not food items and vice versa.

What does the Constitution say on this?
Agriculture is in the state list under the Constitution.

But, Entry 33 of the Concurrent List provides Centre and the states powers to control production, supply and distribution of products of any industry, including agriculture.

- Usually, when a state wants to amend a Central law made under one of the items in the concurrent list, it needs the clearance of the Centre.
- When a state law contradicts a Central law on the same subject, the law passed by Parliament prevails.

Why the Constitution envisaged such an arrangement?
This is an arrangement envisaged as most Parliament laws apply to the whole of India and states amending the Central laws indiscriminately could lead to inconsistencies in different regions on the application of the same law. In matters of trade and commerce, this could especially pose serious problems.

The other option available with the states is:
To take Centre to the Supreme Court over the validity of these laws.

- Article 131 of the Constitution provides exclusive jurisdiction to the Supreme Court to adjudicate matters between the states and the Centre.
- Article 254 (2) of the Constitution empowers state governments to pass legislations which negate the Central acts in the matters enumerated under the Concurrent List.
  - A state legislation passed under Article 254 (2) requires the assent of the President of India.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Articles 131 and 254(2).
3. What happens when a State’s law contravenes centre’s law?

Mains Link:
The three agriculture laws passed by the Centre recently are a clear infringement on the states’ right to legislate. Discuss.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G6T8318CR.1&imageview=0.
4. Parliamentary Panel report on Covid-19 management:

Context:
Report submitted recently by the standing committee on Home Affairs.

Key Recommendations:
1. Bring a comprehensive public health Act with suitable legal provisions to keep checks and controls over private hospitals in times of a pandemic.
2. Curb black marketing of medicines and ensure product standardisation.
3. The government should be proactive by holding awareness campaigns on cheaper and effective repurposed medicines to prevent people from panicking and spending a huge amounts of money on expensive drugs.
4. There is need to have regulatory oversight on all hospitals working in the country to prevent refusal to accept insurance claims.
5. A separate wing may be formed in the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) that will specialise in handling/managing pandemics like COVID-19 in future.
6. Measures should be taken to avoid social stigma and fear of isolation and quarantine, by making people aware and treating them with respect and empathy.
7. The problems being faced by farmers, non-corporate and non-farm small/micro enterprises in getting loans need to be addressed.

Need for comprehensive measures:
1. There have been several reported instances of beds reserved for COVID-19 patients in private hospitals being sold at exorbitant rates.
2. Also, medicines that ‘helped’ in containing the COVID-19 infection were sold at higher rates.
3. In the initial phase of the pandemic, medical insurance was not extended to patients with COVID-19 infection.
4. With schools shut down now for more than nine months, many children were deprived of mid-day meal. Many States continued the scheme by delivering dry ration to students at their homes or giving them allowances. But this was not uniform.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Difference between Parliamentary vs Cabinet committees.
2. Standing vs select vs finance committees.
3. Who appoints chairperson and members of these committees?
4. Committees exclusive to only Lok Sabha.
5. Committees where Speaker is the chairperson.

Mains Link:
What are Parliamentary Standing committees? Why are they necessary? Discuss their roles and functions to bring out their significance.


Topics: Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary; Ministries and Departments of the Government; pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity.

1. Lok Adalat creates history by settling 2.61 lakh cases in Karnataka:

Context:
The High Court of Karnataka and the Karnataka State Legal Services Authority (KSLSA) have created history in settlement of cases.

Key Points:
1. A record 2,61,882 cases were settled in a single day at the mega Lok Adalat held on December 19.
2. This has resulted in a 12.17% reduction of cases pending before courts in taluks and districts, apart from the High Court.
3. A total of ₹669.95 crore was awarded as compensation or settlement amount by amicably resolving cases related to motor vehicle accident claims, land acquisition, and other civil matters.
4. The settlements also yielded a revenue of ₹41.45 crore for the State exchequer by way of fine through the compounding of around two lakh pending criminal cases.

What is a Lok Adalat?
Lok Adalat is one of the alternative dispute redressal mechanisms, it is a forum where disputes/cases pending in the court of law or at pre-litigation stage are settled/compromised amicably.

- The Lok Adalats are formed to fulfil the promise given by the preamble of the Indian Constitution—securing Justice – social, economic and political of every citizen of India.

Constitutional basis:
- Article 39A of the Constitution provides for free legal aid to the deprived and weaker sections of the society and to promote justice on the base of equal opportunity.
- Articles 14 and 22(1) of the Constitution also make it compulsory for the State to guarantee equality before the law.

Statutory provisions:
Under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 Lok Adalats have been given statutory status.

Final award:
The decision made by the Lok Adalats is considered to be a verdict of a civil court and is ultimate and binding on all parties.

No appeal:
- There is no provision for an appeal against the verdict made by Lok Adalat.
- But, they are free to initiate litigation by approaching the court of appropriate jurisdiction by filing a case by following the required procedure, in exercise of their right to litigate.

Court fee:
There is no court fee payable when a matter is filed in a Lok Adalat. If a matter pending in the court of law is referred to the Lok Adalat and is settled subsequently, the court fee originally paid in the court on the complaints/petition is also refunded back to the parties.

Nature of Cases to be Referred to Lok Adalat:
- Any case pending before any court.
- Any dispute which has not been brought before any court and is likely to be filed before the court.
Provided that any matter relating to an offence not compoundable under the law shall not be settled in Lok Adalat.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Who organises National Lok Adalat?
2. What are Permanent Lok Adalats?
3. Composition of Lok Adalats.
4. Nature of cases to be referred to Lok Adalat.
5. Article 39A of the Constitution.

Mains Link:
Discuss the significance of Lok Adalats as an effective dispute resolution institution in present scenario.

2. Five-Month-Old Infant Moves High Court Seeking Ban On Vehicular Movement Inside Cubbon Park:

Context:
The Karnataka High Court has issued notice to the state government and other respondents on a public interest litigation filed by a five-month-old infant, seeking to ban traffic movement within and through Cubbon park, in Bengaluru.

**What’s the issue?**
1. The petitioner argues that allowing vehicle movement inside the park has a direct impact on the health, wellbeing and quality of life of the Petitioner, who as an infant is made to bear the burden of the environmentally irresponsible Respondents.
2. It also impinges on the rights of the petitioner to enjoy pollution free air and water and endangers and impairs his quality of life and is a clear derogation of his constitutional rights.

**Need for:**
The plea relies on a study carried out by a team of researchers from the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, to understand the traffic impact should the Park’s thoroughfares be closed to vehicular traffic.
1. The said researchers concluded that there would be a net reduction in CO2 and PM2.5 emissions as compared to when the traffic is allowed inside the Park.
2. The report has recommended closure of the Park to vehicular traffic after examining the significant improvement to the environment when vehicular traffic was stopped, and an absence of any impact on the traffic when the Park is open to vehicular traffic.

**What is a PIL?**
Public Interest litigation (PIL), as the name suggests, is litigation for any public interest. As the word 'litigation' means 'legal action', PIL stands for a legal action taken by a public spirited person in order to protect public interest (any act for the benefit of public).
- A Public Interest Litigation can be filed against a State/ Central Govt., Municipal Authorities, and not any private party.
- According to the Constitution of India, the petition can be filed under Article 226 before a High Court or under Article 32 before the Supreme Court of India.

**Background:**
Justice Bhagwati and Justice V R Krishna Iyer were among the first judges in the country to admit PILs.

Various areas where public interest litigation (PIL) can be filed:
1. Violation of religious rights or basic fundamental rights
2. Violation of basic human rights of the poor
3. Compel municipal authorities to perform a public duty
4. Content or conduct of government policy

**InstaLinks:**
5. Original jurisdiction of Supreme Court vs High Court.

**Prelims Link:**
1. What is PIL?
2. Who can file it?
3. Areas covered.
4. Procedure to be followed.

**Mains Link:**
Discuss the significance of PIL.

**Topics: Salient features of the Representation of People’s Act.**

1. **Hold polls where NOTA got most votes: petition:**

**Context:**
An advocate has moved the Supreme Court for a direction that fresh elections should be held in a constituency where NOTA (‘None of the above’ option) garnered the maximum number of votes.
- Besides, none of the candidates who lost to NOTA should be allowed to contest the fresh polls.

**Suggestions made:**
1. If the electorate has rejected the candidates by voting for NOTA, the parties should be barred from fielding them again in the fresh polls. The parties should accept that the voters have already made their discontent loud and clear.

2. **Right to reject and elect new candidate** will give power to the people to express their discontent.

3. Right to reject will check corruption, criminalisation, casteism, communalism. Parties would be forced to give tickets to honest and patriotic candidates.

**Right to reject:**

- The ‘right to reject’ was first proposed by the Law Commission in 1999.
- Similarly, the Election Commission endorsed ‘Right to Reject’, first in 2001, under James Lyngdoh [the then CEC], and then in 2004 under T.S. Krishnamurthy [the then CEC], in its Proposed Electoral Reforms.
- Besides, the ‘Background Paper on Electoral Reforms’, prepared by the Ministry of Law in 2010, had proposed that if certain percentage of the vote was negative, then election result should be nullified and new election held.

**The use of NOTA in elections:**

- The option of NOTA for Lok Sabha and assembly elections was prescribed by the SC in 2013.
- The option of NOTA in RS polls was introduced by the EC in 2014.

Thus, India became the 14th country to institute negative voting.

**How is a NOTA vote cast?**
The EVMs have the NOTA option at the end of the candidates’ list. Earlier, in order to cast a negative ballot, a voter had to inform the presiding officer at the polling booth. A NOTA vote doesn’t require the involvement of the presiding officer.

**Why have NOTA if there’s ‘no electoral value’?**

1. NOTA gives people dissatisfied with contesting candidates an opportunity to express their disapproval.
2. This, in turn, increases the chances of more people turning up to cast their votes, even if they do not support any candidate, and decreases the count of bogus votes.
3. Also, the Supreme Court has observed that negative voting could bring about “a systemic change in polls and political parties will be forced to project clean candidates”.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**

1. What is NOTA?
2. Procedure to cast NOTA vote.
3. When was it for the first time used?

**Mains Link:** Right to reject and elect new candidate will give power to the people to express their discontent. Discuss.

**Link:** [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GB5814DB1.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GB5814DB1.1&imageview=0)

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2. ‘Convicted legislators can’t be barred for life from polls’:

**Context:**
The Central government has told the Supreme Court that it rejected the idea of **barring convicted legislators for life from contesting elections, forming or becoming an office-bearer of a political party**.

**What has the Union Ministry of Law and Justice said?**

- An elected representative of the people cannot be equated with public servants who are banned for a lifetime on conviction.
- Disqualification under the **Representation of the People Act of 1951** for the period of the prison sentence and six years thereafter was enough for legislators.

**Election Commission’s observations:**
The Centre’s stand differs from that taken by the Election Commission, which endorsed a life ban as necessary to “champion the cause of decriminalisation of politics”.

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[www.insightsonindia.com](http://www.insightsonindia.com) 31 InsightsIAS
Background:
The case is based on a plea by Supreme Court advocate Ashwini Upadhyay, who argued that:
1. A life ban on conviction should uniformly apply for members of the judiciary, executive and the legislature.
2. There should not be any discrimination of one from the other.
3. An MP or MLA convicted for offences enumerated in Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act should be banned for life.

Rationale behind these arguments:
While a public servant or a government employee is debarred for life on conviction for offences under the Indian Penal Code, money laundering law, foreign exchange violation, UAPA or cheque cases, among other laws, a legislator is “only disqualified for the same offences for a specified period”.
   ● However, the counter view is that legislators are not bound by specific “service conditions”.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Section 8 of the RP Act.
2. SC guidelines in this regard.
3. Powers of Election Commission on matters related to election of candidates.

Mains Link:
Discuss the concerns associated criminalisation of politics and what the Supreme Court done to address these concerns?
Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G2C81FB65.1&imageview=0.

3. How NRIs could vote by post?

Context:
The Election Commission (EC) recently approached the Law Ministry to permit NRIs to cast their votes from overseas through postal ballots.

What is the current process of voting for Indian citizens living abroad?
Voting rights for NRIs were introduced only in 2011, through an amendment to the Representation of the People Act 1950.
   ● An NRI can vote in the constituency in which her place of residence, as mentioned in the passport, is located.
   ● She can only vote in person and will have to produce her passport in original at the polling station for establishing identity.

What is current strength of NRI voters?
According to a UN report of 2015, India’s diaspora population is the largest in the world at 16 million people.

If approved, how will voting by postal ballots work for NRIs?
1. According to the EC proposal, any NRI interested in voting through the postal ballot in an election will have to inform the Returning Officer (RO) not later than five days after the notification of the election.
2. On receiving such information, the RO will dispatch the ballot paper electronically.
3. The NRI voters will download the ballot paper, mark their preference on the printout and send it back along with a declaration attested by an officer appointed by the diplomatic or consular representative of India in the country where the NRI is resident.

What happened to the proposal to grant proxy voting rights to overseas electors?
   ● The Union Cabinet passed the proposal on proxy voting rights for NRIs in 2017.
   ● The government then brought a Bill amending the Representation of the People Act 1950.
   ● The Bill was passed by Lok Sabha and was awaiting Rajya Sabha’s approval when it lapsed with the dissolution of the 16th Lok Sabha.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. What is Postal ballot?
2. Who can cast their votes through postal ballot?  
3. How do NRIs cast their votes?  

Mains Link: Should NRIs be permitted to cast their votes from overseas through postal ballots? Discuss.

Link: https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/how-nris-could-vote-by-post-7088800/.

4. Model code of conduct:

Context:
The State Election Commission (SEC) has sought an explanation from Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on the complaint that he had violated the model code of conduct with his announcement that COVID-19 vaccination will be provided free of cost to everyone in the State.

- A decision will be taken on the matter after studying his explanation.

Model Code of Conduct (MCC):

What is MCC?
These are the guidelines issued by the Election Commission of India for conduct of political parties and candidates during elections mainly with respect to speeches, polling day, polling booths, election manifestos, processions and general conduct.

- This is in keeping with Article 324 of the Constitution, which mandates EC to conduct free and fair elections to the Parliament and State Legislatures.

Aim: To ensure free and fair elections.

When it comes into force?
So far, the Model Code of Conduct came into force immediately on announcement of the election schedule by the commission. The Code remains in force till the end of the electoral process.

Status:
The need for such code is in the interest of free and fair elections. However, the code does not have any specific statutory basis. It has only a persuasive effect. It contains what is known as “rules of electoral morality”. But this lack of statutory backing does not prevent the Commission from enforcing it.

Evolution:
The Commission issued the code for the first time in 1971 (5th Election) and revised it from time to time. This set of norms has been evolved with the consensus of political parties who have consented to abide by the principles embodied in the said code and also binds them to respect and observe it in its letter and spirit.

What it contains?
The salient features of the Model Code of Conduct lay down how political parties, contesting candidates and party(s) in power should conduct themselves during the process of elections i.e. on their general conduct during electioneering, holding meetings and processions, poll day activities and functioning of the party in power etc.

Enforcement:
The EC has devised several mechanisms to take note of the violation of the code, which include joint task forces of enforcement agencies and flying squads. The latest is the introduction of the cVIGIL mobile app through which audio-visual evidence of malpractices can be reported.
5. Why won’t Gulf NRIs get postal voting rights for now?

Context:
The Election Commission has named a few countries where it would like to have postal voting introduced for NRIs on a pilot basis.
- The proposal may get implemented first for voters based in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, Japan, Australia, Germany, France, and South Africa.

What is the current strength of NRI voters?
According to a UN report of 2015, India’s diaspora population is the largest in the world at 16 million people.
- Registration of NRI voters, in comparison, has been very low: a little over 1 lakh overseas Indians registered as voters in India, according to the EC.
- In last year’s Lok Sabha elections, roughly 25,000 of them flew to India to vote.
- Out of 1.18 lakh NRI voters, the largest number — about 89,000 — are registered to vote in Kerala. The second-largest cohort (roughly 7,500) are registered in Andhra Pradesh.

What is the reason behind the EC leaving out the Gulf countries?
Holding a democratic exercise, involving voters queuing outside Indian Missions and Embassies, in non-democratic countries will require permissions, and the host nation may not approve. Given these concerns, the EC, for now, hasn’t included Gulf countries in its proposed pilot.

If approved, how will voting by postal ballots work for NRIs?
1. The EC has proposed that any NRI interested in voting through the postal ballot in an election will have to inform the Returning Officer (RO) not later than five days after the notification of the election.
2. On receiving such information, the RO will dispatch the ballot paper electronically.
3. A designated officer in the Indian mission will download the ballot paper on the voter’s behalf, and hand it over to the overseas elector.
4. The overseas elector can then mark her preference at the mission, get the self-declaration form attested by the designated officer, and hand back the ballot paper and declaration form in a sealed envelope to the mission.
5. The mission will then dispatch all the envelopes to the election officer concerned.

What is the current process of voting for Indian citizens living abroad?
- Voting rights for NRIs were introduced only in 2011, through an amendment to the Representation of the People Act 1950.
- An NRI can vote in the constituency in which her place of residence, as mentioned in the passport, is located.
- She can only vote in person and will have to produce her passport in original at the polling station for establishing identity.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. What is Postal ballot?
2. Who can cast their votes through postal ballot?
3. How do NRIs cast their votes?
4. NRIs vs PIOs.
5. Rights of NRIs.

Mains Link:
Should NRIs be permitted to cast their votes from overseas through postal ballots? Discuss.
**Topics: Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.**

### 1. Attorney General:

**Context:**
Attorney-General K.K. Venugopal has given his consent to a law student to initiate contempt of court proceedings against artist Rachita Taneja for her tweets and cartoons.

- Mr. Venugopal said the tweets and the cartoons that accompanied them were intended “to denigrate the Supreme Court and lower its authority in the eyes of the public”.

**What is the case for prior approval in Contempt Cases?**
The prior consent in writing of the Attorney General is required for the Supreme Court to initiate criminal contempt action in a case a/c to the Contempt of Court Act, 1971.

- AGI consent is a form of check on the much-debated suo-motu power of criminal contempt.

**Attorney General- Facts:**
The Attorney General for India is the central government’s chief legal advisor, and its primary lawyer in the Supreme Court of India.
He is a part of the Union Executive.

**Appointment and eligibility:**
He is appointed by the President of India under Article 76(1) of the Constitution and holds office during the pleasure of the President.

- He must be a person qualified to be appointed as a Judge of the Supreme Court.
- He should be an Indian Citizen.
- He must have either completed 5 years in High Court of any Indian state as a judge or 10 years in High Court as an advocate.
- He may be an eminent jurist too, in the eye of the President.

**Powers and Functions:**
1. The Attorney General is necessary for giving advice to the Government of India in legal matters referred to him. He also performs other legal duties assigned to him by the President.
2. The Attorney General has the right of audience in all Courts in India as well as the right to participate in the proceedings of the Parliament, though not to vote.
3. The Attorney General appears on behalf of Government of India in all cases (including suits, appeals and other proceedings) in the Supreme Court in which Government of India is concerned.
4. He also represents the Government of India in any reference made by the President to the Supreme Court under Article 143 of the Constitution.
5. The Attorney General can accept briefs but cannot appear against the Government.
6. He cannot defend an accused in the criminal proceedings and accept the directorship of a company without the permission of the Government.
7. The Attorney General is assisted by two Solicitor General and four Additional Solicitor Generals.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. Article 143 of the Constitution.
2. Who appoints AG and SGs?
3. The right of AG to participate in the proceedings of the Parliament?
4. Who can be appointed as AG?
5. Article 76(1) of the Constitution.

6. The Union Executive consists of?

**Mains Link:**
Discuss the roles and functions of AG.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GGR818BFH.1&imageview=0.
2. Governor not sending Bills for Presidential assent:

Context:
Rajasthan Chief Minister Ashok Gehlot has said the Amendment Bills passed in the State Assembly last month to counter the Centre’s farm laws were held up in Raj Bhavan, as **the Governor was not sending them for Presidential assent**.

- The Union government was not willing to accept that **the Bills were in “public interest”**, he said.

What does the Constitution of India say on Governor’s power to reserve bills for consideration of the President?

**Article 200** of the Indian Constitution deals with the powers of the Governor with regard to assent given to bills passed by the State legislature and other powers of the Governor such as reserving the bill for the President’s consideration.

According to Article 200, when a Bill, passed by the Legislature of a State, is presented to the Governor, he has four options:

1. He assents to the Bill
2. He withholds assent
3. He reserves the Bill for the consideration of the President
4. He returns the Bill to the Legislature for reconsideration.

**Options before the President:**
When a Bill is reserved by a Governor for the consideration of the President, **the President shall declare either that he assents to the Bill or that he withholds assent therefrom**. Provided that:

1. Where the Bill is not a Money Bill, the President may direct the Governor to return the Bill to the House or, as the case may be, the Houses of the Legislature of the State together with such a message as is mentioned in the first proviso to article 200.
2. When a Bill is so returned, the House or Houses shall reconsider it accordingly within a period of six months from the date of receipt of such message and, if it is again passed by the House or Houses with or without amendment, it shall be presented again to the President for his consideration.
3. It is not mentioned in the constitution whether it is obligatory on the part of the President to give his assent to such a bill or not.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. Article 200 of the Indian Constitution.
2. When can a state bill reserved for President's consideration?
3. Options before the President wrt to that bill.
5. Discretionary powers of Governor.

**Topics: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies.**

1. **National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT):**
Constituted under **Companies Act, 2013.**

**Functions:**
It hears appeals against the orders of:

1. NCLT under Section 61 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (IBC).
2. Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India under Section 202 and Section 211 of IBC.
3. The Competition Commission of India (CCI).

**Composition:**
The President of the Tribunal and the chairperson and Judicial Members of the Appellate Tribunal shall be **appointed after consultation with the Chief Justice of India.**
The Members of the Tribunal and the Technical Members shall be appointed on the recommendation of a Selection Committee consisting of:

1. Chief Justice of India or his nominee—Chairperson.
2. A senior Judge of the Supreme Court or a Chief Justice of High Court—Member.
3. Secretary in the Ministry of Corporate Affairs—Member.
4. Secretary in the Ministry of Law and Justice—Member.
5. Secretary in the Department of Financial Services in the Ministry of Finance—Member.

Eligibility:

1. Chairperson – Should be/been judge of the Supreme Court or should be/been Chief Justice of the High Court.
2. Judicial Member – Is/has been a judge of a High Court or is a judicial member of a tribunal for 5 years or more.
3. Technical member– Person with proven ability, integrity and standing having special knowledge and experience of 25 years or more (in specified areas).

Term:
Term of office of chairperson and members is 5 years and they can be reappointed for additional 5 years.

InstaLinks: 5. Eligibility.
Prelims Link: 6. Terms.

1. About NCLAT and NCLT.
2. Functions.
3. Appeals.
4. Composition.

2. Delimitation should be based on 2031 Census:

Context:
A paper released by the Pranab Mukherjee Foundation (PMF) on the eve of the late President’s birth anniversary has suggested that the next delimitation exercise should be a two-step process:

1. A Delimitation Commission should be set up to redraw boundaries of constituencies on the basis of the 2031 Census.
2. A State Reorganisation Act be passed to split States into smaller ones.

Background:
The 84th Amendment to the Constitution in 2002 had put a freeze on the delimitation of Lok Sabha and State Assembly constituencies till the first Census after 2026. While the current boundaries were drawn on the basis of the 2001 Census, the number of Lok Sabha seats and State Assembly seats remained frozen on the basis of the 1971 Census.

Need for reconsideration:
The population according to the last census preceding the freeze was 50 crore, which in 50 years has grown to 130 crore. This has caused a massive asymmetry in the political representation in the country.

What is Delimitation?
Delimitation literally means the process of fixing limits or boundaries of territorial constituencies in a state that has a legislative body.

Who carries out the exercise?
Delimitation is undertaken by a highly powerful commission. They are formally known as Delimitation Commission or Boundary Commission.

- These bodies are so powerful that its orders have the force of law and they cannot be challenged before any court.

The commissions’ orders are enforced as per the date specified by the President of India. Copies of these orders are laid before the Lok Sabha or the concerned Legislative Assembly. No modifications are permitted.

Composition of the Commission:
According to the Delimitation Commission Act, 2002, the Delimitation Commission appointed by the Centre has to have three members: a serving or retired judge of the Supreme Court as the chairperson, and the Chief Election Commissioner or Election Commissioner nominated by the CEC and the State Election Commissioner as ex-officio members.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Previous delimitation commissions - powers and functions.
2. Composition of the commission.
3. Who can set up?
4. Are changes allowed in final orders?
5. Which are the constitution provisions related?

Mains Link:
How and why delimitation of constituencies is carried out? Discuss.
Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GF182CGV3.1&imageview=0.

Topics: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

1. Surgery as part of Ayurveda:

Context:
The government has notified compulsory surgical procedures for PG students of Ayurveda.

How far is surgery part of Ayurveda?
There are two branches of surgery in Ayurveda:
- Shalya Tantra, which refers to general surgery, and Shalakya Tantra which pertains to surgeries related to the eyes, ears, nose, throat and teeth.

All postgraduate students of Ayurveda have to study these courses, and some go on to specialise in these, and become Ayurveda surgeons.

Before the notification, what were the regulations for postgraduate students?
The 2016 regulations allow postgraduate students to specialise in Shalya Tantra, Shalakya Tantra, and Prasuti evam Stree Roga (Obstetrics and Gynecology), the three disciplines involving major surgical interventions.
- Students of these three disciplines are granted MS (Master in Surgery in Ayurveda) degrees.

So, what is new?
The notification mentions 58 surgical procedures that postgraduate students must train themselves in and acquire skills to perform independently.
- The surgeries that have been mentioned in the notification are all that are already part of the Ayurveda course.
- Now, the patients will know exactly what an Ayurveda doctor is capable of. The skill sets have been defined.
- This will remove question marks on the ability of an Ayurveda practitioner.

What were the IMA’s objections?
The notification has invited sharp criticism from the Indian Medical Association, which questioned the competence of Ayurveda practitioners to carry out these procedures, and called the notification an attempt at “mixopathy”.
IMA doctors insist that they are not opposed to the practitioners of the ancient system of medicine.
But they say the new notification somehow gives the impression that the skills or training of the Ayurveda doctor in performing modern surgeries are the same as those practising modern medicine.

- This, they say, is misleading, and an “encroachment into the jurisdiction and competencies of modern medicine”.


2. Ministry seeks proposals for technical textiles body:

Context:
The Ministry of Textiles has invited proposals to constitute a dedicated export promotion council for technical textiles.

Who can apply?
- Exporter associations and trade bodies registered under the Companies Act or Society Registration Act can submit proposals by December 15.

Background:
The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, in February this year, gave its approval to set up a National Technical Textiles Mission, with a four-year implementation period.
- The export promotion council for technical textiles is one of the components of the mission.

Technical textiles industry in India:
- Annual technical textile exports are now worth ₹14,000 crore.
- The government had set a target market size of $350 billion for technical textiles by 2024-2025 from the current $167 billion for the textile and clothing sector.

What are technical textiles?
Technical textiles are defined as textile materials and products manufactured primarily for their technical performance and functional properties rather than aesthetic and decorative characteristics. Technical textiles include textiles for automotive applications, medical textiles, geotextiles, agrotextiles, and protective clothing.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GFB81JF39.1&imageview=0.

3. J&K administration seeks review of order on Roshni Act:

Context:
In a U-turn, the J&K administration has sought modifications to the High Court judgment passed on October 9, which declared the 2001 Roshni Act null and void in the Union Territory (UT) and directed authorities to end the ownership rights of occupants of government land.

Why review the order?
- The petition argued that a large number of common people would suffer unintentionally.
- This includes landless cultivators and individuals who are themselves residing in dwellings on small areas.
- They are unfortunately clubbed along with rich and wealthy land grabbers, who have obtained a title over state land through the provisions of the now struck Act.

What needs to be done?
- Distinguish between the two classes of people; the fact of being either a landless cultivator or the house holder with one dwelling in personal use.
- CBI investigation should focus on the design of legal and policy framework, changes with malafide intention to encroach public land and get possessory rights.
About the Roshini Act:

- Enacted in 2001, the law sought to regularise unauthorised land.
- The Act envisaged the transfer of ownership rights of state land to its occupants, subject to the payment of a cost, as determined by the government.
- The government said the revenue generated would be spent on commissioning hydroelectric power projects, hence the name “Roshni”.
- Further, through amendments, the government also gave ownership rights of agricultural land to farmers occupying it for free, charging them only Rs 100 per kanal as documentation fee.

Why it was scrapped?

1. In 2009, the State Vigilance Organisation registered an FIR against several government officials for alleged criminal conspiracy to illegally possess and vest ownership of state land to occupants who did not satisfy criteria under the Roshni Act.
2. In 2014, a report by the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) estimated that against the targeted Rs 25,000 crore, only Rs 76 crore had been realised from the transfer of encroached land between 2007 and 2013, thus defeating the purpose of the legislation.
3. The report blamed irregularities including arbitrary reduction in prices fixed by a standing committee, and said this was done to benefit politicians and affluent people.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. What is Roshni Act?
2. Features of the Act.
3. Amendments.

Mains Link:
What is J&K’s Roshni Act? Why was it scrapped recently? Discuss.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GI681PKCM.1&imageview=0.

4. 140 pleas against CAA hang fire:

Context:
Over 140 petitions challenging the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) have been pending for nearly a year in the Supreme Court, leaving petitioners from various walks of life and across the political spectrum “deeply disappointed” over the delay.

Background:
- In December 2019, the court declined a stay while asking the Centre to make an all-out effort to disseminate the actual legislative intent of the citizenship law.
- In January 2020, the court, to another plea to stay the law, had said the CAA was “uppermost in everybody’s minds”.

What’s the concern wrt to CAA?
The CAA fast-tracks citizenship-by-naturalisation process for persons from six religious communities, other than Muslims, who have fled persecution from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.
- The petitions against CAA have argued that a law that welcomes “illegal migrants” into India selectively on the basis of their religion, is against principles of secularism, right to equality and dignity of life enshrined in the Basic Structure of the Constitution.

What’s the issue? Why these petitions should be held at the earliest?
1. The case runs the risk of becoming infructuous.
2. Communal riots and violence had rocked the national capital over the anti-CAA protests.
3. The CAA has been unprecedented in many ways — the nature of amendment which strikes at the root of the Basic Structure of the Constitution.
Therefore, it would be in the best interest of all that the Supreme Court hears the case at the earliest and put at rest these issues.

**How the government defends the law?**
The Union Home Ministry described the CAA as a “benign” law which does not lead to expulsion, deportation or refoulement of illegal migrants.
- It says that the CAA merely offers “amnesty” without hurting India’s secularism.
- It relaxes the settled principles of Indian citizenship for Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians persecuted in the “theocratic States” of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. Which religions are covered under CAA?
2. Countries covered under the law.

**Mains Link:**
5. Differences between NRI, OCI and PIO.

**5. National Register of Citizens (NRC):**

**Context:**
The National Register of Citizens (NRC) authorities have submitted to the Gauhati High Court an affidavit reportedly containing the details of “illegal foreigners” whose names had crept into the updated list of citizens released in 2019.

**Background:**
Some 19.06 lakh out of 3.3 crore applicants were excluded from the complete draft NRC published on August 31, 2019. It was later found that some “ineligible people” — those without papers establishing their domicile in Assam before March 24, 1971 — had been included in the citizens’ list.

**About NRC:**
- The NRC was created in 1951 to determine who was born in Assam and is therefore Indian, and who might be a migrant from erstwhile East Pakistan, now Bangladesh.
- The demand for updating the NRC was first raised in 1980 during the anti-foreigners Assam agitation spearheaded by the All Assam Students’ Union.
- A 2009 petition before the Supreme Court by the NGO Assam Public Works led to the updating exercise through a notification in December 2013.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. Relation between Census and National Population Register.
2. NPR vs NRC.
3. How NRC is related to Assam accord.
4. Constitutional provisions wrt to grant and revocation of citizenships.
5. Who carries out Census? 

Mains Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G9T824GBK.1&imageview=0]

Discuss why a nationwide NRC exercise may not be feasible.

6. The highlights of Karnataka’s new anti-cow slaughter bill:

Context:
The government in Karnataka passed the Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Bill (2020) in the Assembly.

How are ‘beef’ and ‘cattle’ defined in the latest Karnataka Bill?
1. ‘Beef’ is defined as the flesh of cattle in any form.
2. ‘Cattle’ is defined as “cow, calf of a cow and bull, bullock, and he or she buffalo below the age of thirteen years”.
3. ‘Gau Shalas’: Shelters established for the protection and preservation of cattle registered with the Department of Animal Husbandry and Fisheries.

Who has the power to conduct searches?
- Police officers ranked sub-inspector and above or a competent authority will have the power to search premises and seize cattle and materials used or intended to use to commit the offence.
- Such seizures, if any, will then be reported before the Sub Divisional Magistrate without unreasonable delay.

What are the penalties?
- It is a cognizable offence, violators can attract three to seven years of imprisonment.
- While a penalty between Rs 50,000 and Rs 5 lakh can be levied for the first offence, second and subsequent offences can attract penalties ranging between Rs 1 lakh and Rs 10 lakh.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link: 1. Key features of the Bill.
2. Similar laws by other states.
Mains Link: Discuss the rationale behind and implications of such laws.

7. Withdraw plea on water use, Centre tells Telangana:

Context:
The Centre has said that it would consider referring (under Section 3 of the Inter State River Waters Disputes Act) the matter for reallocation of Krishna waters between Telangana and Andhra Pradesh either to a new tribunal or to the existing Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II headed by Justice Brijesh Kumar, once Telangana withdrew its petition on the issue in the Supreme Court.

What’s the issue?
The Telangana government has filed a special leave petition (SLP) in Supreme Court seeking a direction to Andhra Pradesh government not to go ahead calling tenders for the Rayalaseema Lift Irrigation Scheme.
- The government maintains that under the provisions of the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014, proposal for any new project on Krishna has to be first placed before the Krishna River Management Board and then before the Apex Council for ratification.

Background:
The two States- AP ans Telangana- share stretches of the Krishna and the Godavari and own their tributaries.
- They have embarked on several new projects without getting clearance from the river boards, the Central Water Commission and the apex council comprising the Union Water Resources Minister and the Chief Ministers, as mandated by the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014.
The Krishna:
It is an east-flowing river. **Originates at Mahabaleshwar** in Maharashtra and merges with the Bay of Bengal, flowing through Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh.

**Basin:** Together with its tributaries, it forms a vast basin that covers 33% of the total area of the four states.

What is the dispute all about?
The dispute began with the erstwhile Hyderabad and Mysore states, and later continuing between successors Maharashtra, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.
In 1969, the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal (KWDT) was set up under the Inter-State River Water Dispute Act, 1956, and presented its report in 1973.
The report, which was published in 1976, divided the 2060 TMC (thousand million cubic feet) of Krishna water at 75 per cent dependability into three parts:
1. 560 TMC for Maharashtra.
2. 700 TMC for Karnataka.
3. 800 TMC for Andhra Pradesh.

Revised order:
As new grievances arose between the states, the second KWDT was instituted in 2004. It delivered its report in 2010, which made allocations of the Krishna water at 65 per cent dependability and for surplus flows as follows: 81 TMC for Maharashtra, 177 TMC for Karnataka, and 190 TMC for Andhra Pradesh.

After the creation of Telangana as a separate state in 2014, Andhra Pradesh is asking to include Telangana as a separate party at the KWDT and that the allocation of Krishna waters be reworked among four states, instead of three.
It has challenged the order of the Brijesh Kumar Tribunal in the Supreme Court.

**InstaLinks:**

1. Tributaries of Krishna.
2. Tributaries of Godavari.
3. East vs West flowing rivers of India.
4. Interstate river water disputes- key provisions.


**Prelims Link:**

[Link](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GI2821VVK.1&imageview=0)

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**8. Three capitals for Andhra Pradesh- Issues:**

**Context:**
Telugu Desam Party (TDP) national president N. Chandrababu Naidu has challenged Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy to hold a referendum on the idea of the three capitals.

**Three capitals:**
On July 31 the state government notified the AP Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Act, 2020, and the AP Capital Region Development Authority (Repeal) Act, 2020.
This law paves the way for three capitals for the state.
1. Amaravati– legislative capital.
2. Visakhapatnam– executive capital.

**Need for three capitals:**
1. The government says it is against building one mega capital while neglecting other parts of the state.
Three capitals ensure equal development of different regions of the state.
2. Decentralisation has been the central theme in recommendations of all major committees that were set up to suggest a suitable location for the capital of Andhra Pradesh. These include Justice B N Srikrishna Committee, K Sivaramakrishnan Committee, G N Rao Committee etc.
Why implementing this idea will be difficult?
1. **Coordination and logistics fear:** Coordinating between seats of legislature and executive in separate cities will be easier said than done, and with the government offering no specifics of a plan, officers and common people alike fear a logistics nightmare.
2. **Time and costs of travel:** Executive capital Visakhapatnam is 700 km from judicial capital Kurnool, and 400 km from legislative capital Amaravati. The Amaravati-Kurnool distance is 370 km. The time and costs of travel will be significant.

Which other Indian states have multiple capitals?
1. Maharashtra has two capitals—Mumbai and Nagpur (which holds the winter session of the state assembly).
2. Himachal Pradesh has capitals at Shimla and Dharamshala (winter).
3. The former state of Jammu & Kashmir had Srinagar and Jammu (winter) as capitals.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. What is Public Interest Litigation petition?
2. Which Indian states have multiple capitals?
3. AP’s proposed capitals.
4. Various writs under the Indian constitution.

**Mains Link:** Discuss the idea of multiple state capitals. Explain in what way it may impact the governance of a state in the country? Substantiate with suitable example.

Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G6T8318C9.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G6T8318C9.1&imageview=0)

9. J&K Internet ban extended:

**Context:**
The Jammu and Kashmir administration has extended the ban on 4G mobile Internet up to January 8, saying “the restrictions on the high-speed connectivity acted as an impediment to attempts” of the militants to disturb the District Development Council (DDC) polls.

**Need for:**
An order issued by the Jammu and Kashmir Home Department noted that there were credible inputs about the presence of a large number of militants trying to infiltrate from across the border.

**Supreme Court’s ruling in 2020:**
Supreme Court on May 11 refused to restore 4G internet in Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir.
- But, the Court had ordered the Centre and Jammu and Kashmir administration to form a committee of Secretaries from MHA and J&K UT Admin to take a call after reviewing the ground security situation.
- The high-powered Committee headed by the MHA Secretary will also look into the contentions raised by various petitioners.

**Important observations made and rationale behind this verdict:**
- There is a need to ensure that national security and human rights are balanced. J&K UT has plunged into crisis, but at the same time there are concerns related to ongoing pandemic and hardships.
- The bench also referred to its earlier decision in the Anuradha Bhasin case (2020) wherein it ordered review of restrictions placed in J&K in the wake of abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution.

**Background- what’s the issue?**
- In August 2019, the Central government had suspended all modes of communications in the wake of revocation of Jammu and Kashmir’s special status, granted under Article 370. Eventually, services were partially restored, with internet speed restricted to 2G.
But, the administration opposed restoration of 4G services in the union territory. It justified its move in view of protecting the sovereignty, integrity and security of the country.

**Criticisms against the internet shutdown:**
- Restrictions have virtually abrogated the fundamental rights and paralyzed the lives of seven million people in the region.
- The shutdown of internet services have severe consequences on business, trade and heavily affect the common people in the region.

**What procedure does the government follow to suspend Internet services?**
The Information Technology Act, 2000, the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), 1973 and the Telegraph Act, 1885 are the three laws that deal with suspension of Internet services. But before 2017, Internet suspension orders were issued under section 144 of the CrPC.
- In 2017, the central government notified the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Service) Rules under the Telegraph Act to govern suspension of Internet.
- These Rules derive their powers from Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph Act, which talks about interception of messages in the “interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India”.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. Section 144 of the CrPC.
4. Anuradha Bhasin case (2020) is related to?
5. Article 370 of the Constitution.

**Mains Link:**
Discuss about the various impacts of internet suspension in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir.

10. **MP anti-conversion Bill:**

**Context:**
The proposed law is called the Madhya Pradesh Dharmik Swatantrata (Freedom of Religion) Bill 2020.
- Madhya Pradesh Cabinet has given its nod to an ordinance on the Bill.

**Key Provisions:**
1. Seeks to regulate inter-faith marriages in the state.
2. Exempts reconversion to parental religion from its purview.
3. Jail term of up to 10 years and a fine of ₹1 lakh for “conversion through marriage or other forcible means”.
4. The bill seeks to prohibit religious conversions or an attempt of conversion by means of misrepresentation, allurement, threat, undue influence, coercion, marriage, and any other fraudulent means.
5. The conspiracy and (the act of) abetting a person for conversion has also been prohibited.
6. Forceful conversions and marriages will be a cognizable offence and be non-bailable.

**Issues and concerns:**
States are opting for laws on freedom of religion for marriage (‘love jihad’).
- The Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020, was notified by Uttar Pradesh last month.
- Haryana and Karnataka announced intentions to enact such laws.
This has made the topic debatable.

**What critics say?**
The law has come under sharp criticism from several legal scholars who had contended that the concept of ‘love jihad’ did not have any constitutional or legal basis.
- They have pointed to Article 21 of the constitution which guarantees individuals the right to marry a person of one’s choice.
Also, under Article 25, freedom of conscience, the practice and conversion of religion of one’s choice including not following any religion, are also guaranteed.

Supreme Court on Marriage and Conversion:
- The Apex Court of India in its several judgements has held that the state and the courts have no jurisdiction over an adult’s absolute right to choose a life partner.
- The Supreme Court of India, in both the Lily Thomas and Sarla Mudgal cases, has confirmed that religious conversions carried out without a bona fide belief and for the sole purpose of deriving some legal benefit do not hold water.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link: Mains Link:
1. About Article 21. The right to choose a partner or live with a person of choice was part of a citizen’s fundamental right to life and liberty. Discuss.
2. Article 25.
3. What has the Allahabad High Court said in Salamat Ansari-Priyanka Kharwar case.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GJN84AUAH.1&imageview=0.

Topics: Development processes and the development industry- the role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.

1. Two-child policy:

Context:
The latest data from the National Family Health Survey-5 (NFHS-5) shows India doesn’t need a two-child policy: experts.

Supporting findings:
- The use of modern contraceptives in rural and urban areas.
- An improvement in family planning demands being met.
- A decline in the average number of children borne by a woman.

These prove that the country’s population is stabilising.

Key data:
1. The Total Fertility Rate (number of children born per woman) has decreased across 14 out of 17 States and is either at 2.1 children per woman or less.
2. This also implies that most States have attained replacement level fertility, i.e., the average number of children born per woman at which a population exactly replaces itself from one generation to the next.

Criticisms related to two-child policy:
1. Critics argue that the population growth of India will slow down naturally as the country grows richer and becomes more educated.
2. There are already well-documented problems with China’s one-child policy, namely the gender imbalance resulting from a strong preference for boys and millions of undocumented children who were born to parents that already had their one child.
3. By interfering with the birth rate, India faces a future with severe negative population growth, a serious problem that most developed countries are trying to reverse. With negative population growth, the number of old people receiving social services is larger than the young tax base that is paying for the social services.
4. The law related may also be anti-women. Human rights activists argue that the law discriminate against women right from birth (through abortion or infanticide of female fetuses and babies).
5. A legal restriction to two children could force couples to go for sex-selective abortions as there are only two ‘attempts’.

Topics: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

1. How much of India’s population lives with disabilities?

Context:
December 3 is marked by the UN as International Day of Persons with Disabilities in a bid to promote a more inclusive and accessible world for the differently-abled and to raise awareness for their rights.

Facts and figures:
About 2.2% of India’s population lives with some kind of physical or mental disability, as per the National Statistics Office report on disability released last year.

How are the disabled identified?
Until the 2011 census, there were questions on seven kinds of disabilities in the questionnaire. This list of disabilities was expanded to 21 when the Rights of People with Disabilities was introduced in 2016. Accordingly, the 2019 report identified disabled people as those with temporary loss of an ability as well as neurological and blood disorders in addition to the earlier definition, that included mental retardation and permanent inability to move, speak, hear and see.

- Significantly, the revised definition recognises deformities and injuries of acid attack victims as disabilities, entitling them to various relief measures.

Who are disabled and in what way?
- A higher proportion of men were disabled in India compared with women, and disability was more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas.
- Inability to move without assistance was the most common disability. More men experienced locomotor disability than women.

Why is it important to get the number of disabled people right?
The disabled in India are entitled to some benefits, ranging from reservation in educational institutes to concessions on railway tickets.

- To claim these benefits, they have to furnish certificates as proof of disability.
- At the macro level, data on the prevalence and type of disability is useful while making allocations for welfare schemes.

Constitutional Frameworks for Disabled in India:
- Article 41 of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP) states that State shall make effective provision for securing right to work, to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement, within the limits of its economic capacity and development.
- The subject of ‘relief of the disabled and unemployable’ is specified in state list of the Seventh Schedule of the constitution.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Article 41 of the Indian Constitution is related to?
3. About the Accessible India Campaign.
4. DeenDayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme.

2. Parliamentary panel calls for migrant workers’ database:
Context:
The standing committee on Home Affairs has released its report “Management of COVID-19 pandemic and related issues”.

www.insightsonindia.com 47 InsightsIAS
Key Recommendations:
1. **A national database of migrant workers** should be collated at the earliest to ensure that if ever there is a repeat of a COVID-19-like pandemic, the relief measures should reach the intended beneficiaries.
2. The database should have details of the source State, the destination State, skill set of the worker and other contact details.
3. The **Disaster Management Act, 2005, and the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897** — the two guiding laws during the pandemic — are insufficient.
4. **Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897** should be reviewed. The Act is outdated as it was framed in the colonial era, which was even well before the Spanish flu of 1918.

Need for a database:
During the extended lockdown, the task of identifying the location and disbursing relief measures to the migrant workers became difficult as the Central government did not have any data of the migrant workers.

- In the absence of a comprehensive national database, it is difficult to extend the relief measures by the government to the intended beneficiaries.

InstaLinks:

**Prelims Link:**
1. What is Ordinance? How and when is it promulgated?
2. Definition of violence in the ordinance.
3. Previous examples of implementation of Epidemics Diseases Act, diseases for which it was declared.
4. A notifiable disease.
5. Implementing agency, penalty, protection and inspection of people under the act.

**Mains Link:**
Discuss the key provisions of the 1897 Epidemic Diseases Act.

Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GPM8356C2.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GPM8356C2.1&imageview=0).

3. Any exploitation of Sentinel Island will wipe out tribals:

Context:
Anthropological Survey of India policy document warns of threat to endangered group from commercial activity.
The policy document comes almost two years after American national John Allen Chau was allegedly killed by the Sentinelese on the Island.

- The Sentinelese, a most secluded, is a particularly vulnerable tribal group (PVTG) who reside in complete isolation on the island.

Key observations:
- Any exploitation of the North Sentinel Island of the Andamans for commercial and strategic gain would spell the death knell for its occupants.
- The "right of the people to the island is non-negotiable".
- Build a knowledge bank on the Sentinelese.
- Since ‘on-the-spot study’ is not possible for the tribal community, anthropologists suggest the ‘study of a culture from distance’.

Who are sentinelese?
The Sentinelese, with a population of about 50 to 100 on the North Sentinel Island, are not only among the most isolated of the 75 PVTGs across the country, but also among the five in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands which include Great Andamanese, Onge, Jarawa, and Shompens.

Steps taken to ensure the protection of Sentinelese:
1. The entire North Sentinel Island along with 5 km coastal sea from high water mark is notified as tribal reserve.
2. The Government respects their way of life style, therefore, has adopted an ‘eyes-on and hands-off’ practice to protect and safeguard the Sentinelese tribe.
3. A protocol of circumnavigation of the North Sentinel Island has been notified. The ships and aircrafts of Coast Guard and boats of Marine Police make sorties around North Sentinel to keep surveillance.

They have been protected under:

Why are they said to be vulnerable?
1. It is said they have made little to no advancement in the over 60,000 years and still live very primitive lives, surviving mainly on fish and coconuts.
2. They are very vulnerable to germs since they have not had contact with the outside world. Even a common flu virus carried by a visitor could wipe out the entire tribe.
3. Since the 1960s, there have been a handful of efforts to reach out to the tribe but all have largely failed. They have repeatedly, aggressively made it clear that they want to be isolated.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Who are PVTGs?
2. Who are Sentinelese?
3. PVTGs of Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Mains Link:
Discuss how protection and development of PVTGs can be ensured?

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

1. What is the emergency use authorisation drug makers are seeking for the Covid-19 vaccine?

Context:
- US drugmaker Moderna is applying for emergency use authorisation for its Covid-19 vaccine.
- A few days earlier, Pfizer applied for emergency use authorisation for the vaccine it has developed in collaboration with BioNTech.
- In India, Serum Institute of India, which is trialling a version of the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine, has said it expects to seek emergency use authorisation within the next two weeks.

Regular procedure for drug approval:
Vaccines and medicines, and even diagnostic tests and medical devices, require the approval of a regulatory authority before they can be administered.
- In India, the regulatory authority is the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).
- For vaccines and medicines, approval is granted after an assessment of their safety and effectiveness, based on data from trials.

When can emergency use authorisation (EUA) be granted?
In the US, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) grants EUA only after it has been determined that the “known and potential benefits outweigh the known and potential risks of the vaccine” (or medicine).
- This means that a EUA application can be considered only after sufficient efficacy data from phase 3 trials had been generated.
- A EUA cannot be granted solely on the basis of data from phase 1 or phase 2 trials.

What is the process of getting an emergency use authorisation in India?
- Experts and activists say India’s drug regulations do not have provisions for a EUA, and the process for receiving one is not clearly defined or consistent.
- Despite this, CDSCO has been granting emergency or restricted emergency approvals to Covid-19 drugs during this pandemic for remdesivir and favipiravir.

Is there a risk in using a product that has only been granted an EUA?
According to the US FDA, the public has to be informed that a product has only been granted an EUA and not full approval.
- In the case of a Covid-19 vaccine, for example, people have to be informed about the known and potential benefits and risks, and the “extent to which such benefits or risks are unknown”, and that they have a right to refuse the vaccine.

Link: https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/covid-19-vaccine-emergency-use-authorisation-explained-7074852/.

2. WHO World Malaria Report 2020:
Key findings:
- India has made considerable progress in reducing its malaria burden.
- India is the only high endemic country which has reported a decline of 17.6% in 2019 as compared to 2018.
- The Annual Parasitic Incidence (API) reduced by 27.6% in 2018 compared to 2017 and by 18.4% in 2019 as compared to 2018. India has sustained API less than one since year 2012.
- India has also contributed to the largest drop in cases region-wide, from approximately 20 million to about 6 million. The percentage drop in the malaria cases was 71.8% and deaths was 73.9% between 2000 to 2019.

High Burden to High Impact (HBHI) initiative:
- Initiated by WHO in 11 high malaria burden countries, including India.
- In India, implementation has been started in four states i.e. West Bengal and Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh.

About Malaria:
Caused by a parasite that commonly infects a certain type of mosquito which feeds on humans.
Spread: Female Anopheles mosquitoes deposit parasite sporozoites into the skin of a human host.

Four kinds of malaria parasites infect humans:
Plasmodium falciparum, P. vivax, P. ovale, and P. malariae. In addition, P. knowlesi, a type of malaria that naturally infects macaques in Southeast Asia, also infects humans, causing malaria that is transmitted from animal to human (“zoonotic” malaria).

Durgama Anchalare Malaria Nirakaran (DAMaN) initiative:
- Among states, Odisha's Durgama Anchalare Malaria Nirakaran (DAMaN) initiative is significant.
- The initiative aims to deliver services to the most inaccessible and hardest hit people of the State. The initiative has in-built innovative strategies to combat asymptomatic malaria.
- The programme is jointly implemented by Indian Council of Medical Research-National Institute of Malaria Research (ICMR-NIMR), National Vector Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP), Odisha and Medicines for Malaria Venture (MMV).

Insta Links:
Prelims Link:
1. Difference and examples of various diseases caused by Virus and Bacteria.

www.insightsonindia.com
3. What is ‘Havana Syndrome’, what does the latest report say about the mysterious illness?

**Context:**
Nearly four years ago a mysterious neurological illness, referred to as “Havana syndrome”, started to afflict American diplomats and intelligence operatives in Cuba, China, and other countries.

- Now, a report by the National Academies of Sciences (NAS) has found “directed” microwave radiation to be its “plausible” cause.

**What is the ‘Havana syndrome’?**
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.

- The symptoms included nausea, severe headaches, fatigue, dizziness, sleep problems, and hearing loss, which have since come to be known as “Havana Syndrome”.

**What causes the ‘Havana syndrome’?**
**Directed pulsed RF energy** appears to be the most plausible mechanism in explaining these cases among those that the committee considered.

- The immediate symptoms that patients reported including sensations of pain and buzzing sound apparently emanated from a particular direction, or occurred in a specific spot in a room.

**InstaLinks:**
**Prelims Link:**
1. What are Microwave weapons?
2. What is Havana Syndrome? Why is it named so?
3. Reasons behind?
4. Overview of electromagnetic spectrum.

**Mains Link:**
What is 'Havana Syndrome'? Discuss why it was in news recently.
Link: https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/what-is-havana-syndrome-us-report-russia-7095390/.

4. Eluru mystery disease: AIIMS finds traces of lead in blood samples of affected:

**Context:**
At least 550 people fell sick in Eluru town in Andhra Pradesh since Saturday evening due to an undiagnosed illness.

- Following this, the AIIMS team conducted the blood tests.

**What caused this?**
- The results indicate lead and nickel content in drinking water or/milk as the possible reason behind people falling ill.

**What symptoms did the patients show?**
Some of these people complained of seizures, anxiety, vomiting, and headache. So far, the illness has not spread from one to another person.

**Concern:**
The presence of the chemicals in the blood samples was very less as the patients were recovering fast. If the quantity of the toxins was high, or spread through air, it would affect the neurological system.
General factors contributing to lead poisoning:
1. Informal and substandard recycling of lead-acid batteries.
2. Increase in vehicle ownership, combined with the lack of vehicle battery recycling regulation and infrastructure.
3. Workers in dangerous and often illegal recycling operations break open battery cases, spill acid and lead dust in the soil.
4. They also smelt the recovered lead in crude, open-air furnaces that emit toxic fumes poisoning the surrounding community.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trace elements</th>
<th>Effect associated with human health</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Copper (Cu)</td>
<td>Anemia, liver and kidney damage and stomach and intestinal irritation</td>
<td>Soil contamination</td>
<td>Thirulogachandar et al. (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron (Fe)</td>
<td>Anemia, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, chorioiditis, retinitis and conjunctivitis</td>
<td>Meat, whole meal products, potatoes and vegetables</td>
<td>Thirulogachandar et al. (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cobalt (Co)</td>
<td>Sterility, hair loss, vomiting, bleeding, diarrhea, coma and even death</td>
<td>Soil contamination</td>
<td>Thirulogachandar et al. (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manganese (Mn)</td>
<td>Lanquor, sleepiness, weakness, emotional disturbances, spastic gait, recurring leg cramps and paralysis</td>
<td>Spinach, tea, herbs, grains and rice, soya beans, eggs, nuts, olive oil, green beans and oysters</td>
<td>Thirulogachandar et al. (2014)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. 10 chemicals of major public health concern identified by WHO.
2. Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint has been launched by?
3. Lead is mainly used in?
4. Largest primary producers of lead.

5. Lead production and consumption in India.

Mains Link:
Write a note on lead poisoning and ways to prevent it.
Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GE08212FS.1&imageview=0.

5. Vaccination drive after anthrax kills elephants:

What happened?
Anthrax was confirmed as the cause of the death of two female elephants a week ago in the Joypur rainforest in Assam. The two elephants died after ingesting anthrax spores that can remain buried underground for 25-30 years.

Following this, the authorities have undertaken a drive to vaccinate livestock around this area.

- This is the second case of anthrax in the State after two Asiatic water buffaloes died in the Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary in October 2019.

What is anthrax?
Anthrax is a disease caused by Bacillus anthracis, a spore-forming bacteria.
- Affects animals such as cattle, sheep, and goats more often than people.
- People can get anthrax from contact with infected animals, wool, meat, or hides.
- Spread: It does not spread directly from one infected animal or person to another; it is spread by spores. These spores can be transported by clothing or shoes.

Symptoms & Infection:
• **Respiratory infection in humans** initially presents with cold or flu-like symptoms for several days, followed by pneumonia and severe (and often fatal) respiratory collapse.

• **Gastrointestinal (GI) infection in humans** is most often caused by consuming anthrax-infected meat and is characterized by serious GI difficulty, vomiting of blood, severe diarrhea, acute inflammation of the intestinal tract, and loss of appetite.

• **Cutaneous anthrax**, also known as **Hide porter’s disease**, is the cutaneous (on the skin) manifestation of anthrax infection in humans.

**Use in Bioterrorism:**
Anthrax has been **used in biological warfare by agents and by terrorists to intentionally infect**. It was spread in US through a mail. It killed 5 people and “made 22 sick.”

**Vaccine by India:**
In June last year, DRDO and JNU scientists developed a potent Anthrax vaccine. They Claim new vaccine superior than existing ones as it can generate immune response to anthrax toxin as well as spores.

**InstaLinks:**
**Prelims Link:**
1. What is anthrax?
2. Causes and spread.
3. Treatment.
4. Use in bioterrorism.
5. Latest instances of this disease in India.

**Mains Link:**

**6. Maharashtra bill on sexual crime:**

**Context:**
The Maharashtra government this week presented a **draft bill making changes to existing laws on violence against women and children**.

• The Bill is proposed to be enacted as **Shakti Act, 2020**.

**What is the reason given by Maharashtra to bring in a new law?**
An increase in the number of cases of violence, specifically sexual violence against women and children.

**What does the draft bill proposes?**
1. The draft Bill proposes to make changes to the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act.
2. The changes are proposed in existing sections of rape, sexual harassment, acid attack and child sexual abuse.
3. The Bill proposes death penalty in cases of rape, gang rape, rape by persons in authority, aggravated sexual assault of minors and in cases of acid attack when grievous injury is caused.
4. The death penalty is proposed in cases which are heinous in nature and where adequate conclusive evidence is available and circumstances warrant exemplary punishment.

**Are there any specific provisions related to social media?**
The draft Bill proposes an additional law to deal with **abuse of women on social media**.
**Section 354E** is added to include intentional acts creating “a sense of danger, intimidation, and fear to a woman” apart from insulting her modesty by any act, deed or words including offensive communication will be an offence with a maximum punishment of two years and a Rs 1 lakh fine.

• This also includes uploading morphed videos of women or threatening them with uploading of photos, videos which could defame, cause disrepute to them or violate their privacy.

**Provisions for “false” information and “implied consent”:**
The Bill also makes provision for making a “false complaint” or provides false information in respect of offence committed stating that anyone who does that “solely with the intention to humiliate, extort or threaten or defame or harass” a person shall face imprisonment for a term up to one year or fine or both.
7. Plasmodium ovale and other types of malaria:

Context:
A not very common type of malaria, **Plasmodium ovale**, has been identified in a jawan in Kerala.

Types of malaria:
- Malaria is caused by the bite of the female **Anopheles mosquito**, if the mosquito itself is infected with a malarial parasite.
- **There are five kinds of malarial parasites** Plasmodium falciparum, Plasmodium vivax (the commonest ones), Plasmodium malariae, Plasmodium ovale and Plasmodium knowlesi.

**Plasmodium ovale**:
Symptoms include fever for 48 hours, headache and nausea, and the treatment modality is the same as it is for a person infected with P vivax. P ovale is no more dangerous than getting a viral infection.

8. Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY):

Context:
The **National Health Agency (NHA)** has released its data on “The role of private hospitals”. Key findings:
- Patients seeking care at private hospitals tend to be older and a larger share consist of men compared with those seeking medical care at public hospitals.
- Private hospitals account for over half of the empanelled hospitals, nearly two-thirds of claim volumes, and three-quarters of claim outlays in the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY).
- The top PM-JAY packages by value — including knee replacement, cataracts, haemodialysis and cardiovascular surgeries — are overwhelmingly provided by private hospitals.
- Over 72% of private empanelled hospitals are located in just seven States: Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Punjab and Karnataka.

Challenges and Concerns:
- Medical audits have also revealed that private hospitals are more likely to indulge in fraud and abuse than public hospitals and more likely to discharge patients early post-surgery to cut costs.
- Ensuring the accountability of private hospitals to provide efficient and high-quality care is a preeminent challenge for scheme implementation.
- There is huge State-wise variation in the share of empanelled private hospitals from less than 25% in most of the northeastern and hill States to 80% in Maharashtra.
- Private hospitals have fewer beds than public hospitals and are more likely to be empanelled for surgical packages and super-specialties.

What needs to be done?
Offering a robust public sector alternative in the form of high-performing government hospitals serving as a market anchor will be one element of such an approach.

**Key Features of PM-JAY**:
- The world’s largest health insurance/ assurance scheme is centrally sponsored and is jointly funded by both the central government and the states.
2. It provides cover of 5 lakhs per family per year, for secondary and tertiary care hospitalization across public and private empaneled hospitals in India.
3. Coverage: Over 10.74 crore poor and vulnerable entitled families (approximately 50 crore beneficiaries) are eligible for these benefits.
4. Provides cashless access to health care services for the beneficiary at the point of service.

Eligibility:
- No restrictions on family size, age or gender.
- All pre-existing conditions are covered from day one.
- Covers up to 3 days of pre-hospitalization and 15 days post-hospitalization expenses such as diagnostics and medicines.
- Benefits of the scheme are portable across the country.
- Services include approximately 1,393 procedures covering all the costs related to treatment, including but not limited to drugs, supplies, diagnostic services, physician’s fees, room charges, surgeon charges, OT and ICU charges etc.
- Public hospitals are reimbursed for the healthcare services at par with the private hospitals.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link: 1. Components of Ayushman Bharat. 2. PMJAY- Key features. 3. Eligibility. 4. About the National Health Agency.

Mains Link: Discuss the significance and potential of PMJAY. Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G1S82MA87.1&imageview=0.

9. ‘Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India’:

Context:
NITI Aayog has released a white paper: Vision 2035: Public Health Surveillance in India with the vision:
1. To make India’s public health surveillance system more responsive and predictive to enhance preparedness for action at all levels.
2. Citizen-friendly public health surveillance system will ensure individual privacy and confidentiality, enabled with a client feedback mechanism.
3. Improved data-sharing mechanism between Centre and states for better disease detection, prevention, and control.
4. India aims to provide regional and global leadership in managing events that constitute a public health emergency of international concern.

Focus of the paper and Significance:
- It contributes by suggesting mainstreaming of surveillance by making individual electronic health records the basis for surveillance.
- Public health surveillance (PHS) is an important function that cuts across primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of care. Surveillance is ‘Information for Action’.
- It envisions a citizen-friendly public health system, which will involve stakeholders at all levels, be it individual, community, health care facilities or laboratories, all while protecting the individual’s privacy and confidentiality.’
- The white paper lays out India’s vision 2035 for public health surveillance through the integration of the three-tiered public health system into Ayushman Bharat.
- It also spells out the need for expanded referral networks and enhanced laboratory capacity.

The building blocks for this vision are:
An interdependent federated system of governance between the Centre and states, a new data-sharing mechanism that involves the use of new analytics, health informatics, and data science including innovative ways of disseminating ‘information for action’.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link and Mains Link: Components and key features of the Paper.
10. **AIIMS scientists find lead in milk samples in Eluru:**

**Context:**
Scientists of the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) have revealed that lead was noticed in milk samples collected in Eluru town and its neighbouring villages in West Godavari district of Andhra Pradesh.

**Background:**
With the outbreak of the undiagnosed illness in Eluru and its adjoining areas on December 4, experts and doctors from various organisations rushed to the district and collected food, water, milk, blood and other samples.

**About Lead:**
- Lead in the body is distributed to the brain, liver, kidney and bones. It is stored in the teeth and bones, where it accumulates over time.
- Lead in bone is released into blood during pregnancy and becomes a source of exposure to the developing foetus.
- WHO has identified lead as 1 of 10 chemicals of major public health concern.
- WHO has joined with the United Nations Environment Programme to form the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint.

**Factors contributing to lead poisoning:**
1. Informal and substandard recycling of lead-acid batteries.
2. Increase in vehicle ownership, combined with the lack of vehicle battery recycling regulation and infrastructure.
3. Workers in dangerous and often illegal recycling operations break open battery cases, spill acid and lead dust in the soil.
4. They also smelt the recovered lead in crude, open-air furnaces that emit toxic fumes poisoning the surrounding community.
5. Lead production and consumption in India.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. 10 chemicals of major public health concern identified by WHO.
2. Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint has been launched by?
3. Lead is mainly used in?
4. Largest primary producers of lead.

**Mains Link:**
Write a note on lead poisoning and ways to prevent it.

[Link](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GRI82T MG6.1&imageview=0).

11. **Human Development Index:**

**Context:**
United Nations’ Human Development Index was released recently.
What is HDI?
Published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), it is a statistical tool used to measure a country’s overall achievement in its social and economic dimensions. The social and economic dimensions of a country are based on the health of people, their level of education attainment and their standard of living.

What’s unique about this year’s index?
For the first time, the United Nations Development Programme introduced a new metric to reflect the impact caused by each country’s per-capita carbon emissions and its material footprint, which measures the amount of fossil fuels, metals and other resources used to make the goods and services it consumes.

- This metric is called the Planetary Pressures-adjusted HDI, or PHDI.

India’s performance:
- India dropped two ranks, standing at 131 out of 189 countries.
- If the Index were adjusted to assess the planetary pressures caused by each nation’s development, India would move up eight places in the ranking, according to the report.

Performance of other countries:
1. Norway tops the HDI. It, however, falls 15 places if the new metric (The Planetary Pressures-adjusted HDI, or PHDI) is used, leaving Ireland at the top of the table.
2. In fact, 50 countries would drop entirely out of the “very high human development group” category, using this new metric.
3. Australia falls 72 places in the ranking, while the United States and Canada would fall 45 and 40 places respectively, reflecting their disproportionate impact on natural resources.
4. China would drop 16 places from its current ranking of 85.

Impact of pandemic:
Although this year’s report covers 2019 only, and does not account for the impact of COVID, it projected that in 2020, global HDI would fall below for the first time in the three decades since the Index was introduced.

### Miles to go

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>HDI rank (2019)</th>
<th>Change from 2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepal</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Though India improved its absolute value of the Human Development Index (0.645 in 2019 from 0.642 the previous year), it dropped a place in the overall ranking.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About HDI.
2. Components.
3. How is it calculated?
4. India’s performance.
5. What is the Planetary Pressures-adjusted HDI, or PHDI?
6. About UNDP.

Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G3T82TAMT.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G3T82TAMT.1&imageview=0).
12. Human Freedom Index 2020:

Context:
The Human Freedom Index 2020, a worldwide ranking of civil, economic and personal freedom, was released recently.

- The index was published by American think tank Cato Institute and Fraser Institute in Canada.
- It takes into account 76 indicators of personal, civil, and economic freedoms to rank 162 countries from 2008 to 2018.

India’s performance:
- It placed India at the 111th spot out of 162 countries.
- India ranked 94 on the index in 2019.
- India is ahead of China and Bangladesh, which ranked 129 and 139 on the 2020 index respectively.

Global Performances:
- New Zealand, Switzerland and Hong Kong bagged the first three spots.
- However, Hong Kong’s rank is expected to decline in the future, because of China’s “aggressive interventions” in the region in 2019 and 2020.
- War-torn Syria ranked the last on the list.
- The world has seen a notable decline in personal freedom since 2008.
- The report continues to find a strong, positive relationship between freedom and prosperity, but also finds that here is an unequal distribution of freedom in the world.

India’s performances in various other indices:
India has dropped on several global freedom indexes.
1. Democracy watchdog Freedom House’s report in October showed that internet freedom in India declined for a third straight year in 2019-20.
2. The Global Economic Freedom Index 2020 released in September showed India drop 26 spots from 79 to 105.
3. The World Press Freedom Index, which was released in April, saw India slip two places. India ranked 142 on the index comprising of 180 countries and territories.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link: Overview of the following indices and India’s performance in them:
3. The World Press Freedom Index.
4. Human Development Index.

Mains Link: Analyse India’s performance in the latest Human Freedom Index 2020.
Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G6T8318IP.1&imageview=0.

13. UK’s ‘more infectious’ Covid-19 strain spreads faster:

Context:
A new variant Covid-19 strain has been discovered in the United Kingdom last week and could be the reason behind the sharp rise in cases in the country.
- Scientists and researchers say the new strain has much higher transmissibility than compared to the earlier variant.

Why do viruses mutate?
A mutation just means a difference; a letter change in the genome.
- Mutations in viruses are a natural part of evolution.
- The pressure on the virus to evolve is increased by the fact that so many millions of people have now been infected.

What is the Covid-19 mutant strain?
www.insightsonindia.com
It has been named VUI-202012/01 (the first “Variant Under Investigation” in December 2020) and is defined by a set of 17 changes or mutations. As of Dec 13, a total of 1,108 cases with this new variant had been identified, predominantly in the south and east of England where cases have been rising.

How harmful is the new Covid strain?
- This new variant is showing some 17 changes in the genome, this is a very large change. Due to this change, the transmissibility of this virus has also changed and is 70% more infectious compared to the earlier variant.
- There is a high possibility that the new strain is still in the UK as it has not been detected in other parts of Europe.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. What is Covid 19?
2. What is mutation?
3. What is mRNA?
4. What is RTPCR test?

Mains Link:
Discuss the concerns associated with mutations of Covid-19 virus.
Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GG683B5IM.1&imageview=0.

14. Shigella infection:

Context:
Health officials in Kozhikode district of Kerala recently convened emergency meetings and kicked in preventive measures after six cases of shigella infection.

What is shigella infection?
Shigellosis, or shigella infection, is a contagious intestinal infection caused by a genus of bacteria known as shigella.
- The bacteria is one of the prime pathogens responsible for causing diarrhea, fluctuating between moderate and severe symptoms, especially in children in African and South Asian regions.

How does it spread?
- The bacteria, after entering the body through ingestion, attack the epithelial lining of the colon resulting in inflammation of the cells and subsequently the destruction of the cells in severe cases.
- It takes only a small number of shigella bacteria to enter a person’s system and get her sick.
- The infection is known to spread person-to-person when the bacteria is swallowed accidentally.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About Shigella infection.

Mains Link:
2. Spread.

15. Ayushman Bharat PM-JAY SEHAT:

Context:
PM Modi to launch the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY) SEHAT scheme for the residents of Jammu and Kashmir.

About the Scheme:
- SEHAT scheme stands for Social, Endeavour for Health and Telemedicine, a health insurance scheme for the Union Territory.
- The Scheme provides free of cost insurance cover to all the residents of the UT of J&K.
- It provides financial cover up to Rs.5 Lakh per family on a floater basis to all residents of the UT of J&K.
- It provides for an operational extension of PM-JAY to 15 lakh (approximately) additional families.

About PM-JAY:
The PM-JAY, world’s largest health insurance/assurance scheme fully financed by the government, provides a cover of Rs 500,000 per family per year for secondary and tertiary care hospitalisation across public and private empanelled hospitals in India.

- The benefit of Rs 5,00,000 is on a family floater basis, which means that it can be used by one or all members of the family.
- It covers medical procedures such as oncology, cardiology, nephrology etc and up to three days of pre-hospitalisation and 15 days post-hospitalisation expenses such as diagnostics and medicines are also included in the scheme.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. Components of Ayushman Bharat.
2. PMJAY - Key features.
3. Eligibility.

**Mains Link:**
4. About the National Health Agency.
5. SEHAT scheme.

**16. Why is weather dept asking people in north India not to drink alcohol during the cold wave?**

**Context:**
To avoid an adverse reaction to the cold wave, the IMD shared a list of recommendations, one of which was avoiding alcohol.

**Background:**
According to the IMD, severe cold wave conditions are likely in parts of Haryana, Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Rajasthan from December 29 onwards. Maximum temperature is also forecast to fall by 3 to 5 degrees Celsius after December 28.

**Why is alcohol bad in cold weather?**
Alcohol can decrease the core temperature of the body and increase the risk of hypothermia during cold exposure. A retrospective study in 2004 showed that alcohol consumption is associated with 68 per cent of accidental hypothermia cases.

**How it works:**
1. Alcohol is a vasodilator, which means that it causes blood vessels to relax and dilate or open.
2. So after consuming alcohol, the volume of blood brought to the skin’s surface increases, making you feel warmer as a result.
3. This is also what causes an intoxicated person to look flushed.
4. As the body begins to believe that it is warm, you also start to sweat — a reaction that automatically reduces overall body temperature.
5. Drinking copious amounts of alcohol may affect your body’s ability to detect the cold properly, which is in place to protect you from frostbite and hypothermia.

However, experts say drinking moderately in temperate environments does not significantly affect the core temperature of the body.

**What is hypothermia?**
- Hypothermia is a severe medical condition where the body loses heat before it can generate it, resulting in a dangerously low body temperature.
- While normal body temperature lies at around 37 degrees Celsius, the body temperature of a person suffering from hypothermia drops to below 35 degrees Celsius.
- Common signs include shivering, slow rate of breathing, slurred speech, cold skin and fatigue.

Alcohol also has psychological and behavioural effects, which can impact a person’s ability to correctly perceive how cold it is.

**What is a coldwave?**
A cold wave occurs when the minimum temperature dips to 10 degrees Celsius or less and the departure from normal temperature is 4.5 degrees Celsius or lower.

In severe cold wave conditions, departure from normal temperature is 6.5 degrees or lower.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. What is a cold wave?
2. Severe cold waves.
3. Classifications.
4. About IMD.
5. What is a Vasodilator?
6. What is hypothermia?

**Mains Link:**
Discuss why is weather dept asking people in north India not to drink alcohol during the cold wave?

**17. Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Conjugate vaccine:**

**Context:**
The first indigenous vaccine against pneumonia, developed by the Serum Institute of India (SII), will be launched.

- In July, India’s drug regulator had granted market approval for the Pneumococcal Polysaccharide Conjugate vaccine.

**How the disease is spread?**
Infectious agents may include bacteria, viruses and fungi.

- *Streptococcus pneumoniae* is the most common cause of bacterial pneumonia in children, and *Haemophilus influenzae type b* (Hib) is the second most common cause of bacterial pneumonia. Respiratory syncytial virus is the most common viral cause of pneumonia.

- *Air sacs* in an infected individual’s lungs (alveoli) become inflamed due to deposits of fluid and pus, making it painful and difficult for them to breathe.

**About pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV23):**
It protects against pneumococcal infections.

- PPSV23 protects against 23 types of pneumococcal bacteria.

**Helpful Terms:**
1. **Conjugate:** A type of vaccine that joins a protein to an antigen in order to improve the protection the vaccine provides.
2. **Polysaccharide:** A type of vaccine that is composed of long chains of sugar molecules that resemble the surface of certain types of bacteria in order to help the immune system mount a response.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. Pneumonia- types, causes and symptoms.
2. Antigens vs Antibodies.
3. How a vaccine works?
4. Types of vaccines.
5. About DGCI.
6. Procedure to be followed for vaccine approval in India.

**18. UK vaccine is a global game changer:**

**Context:**
The approval of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine in the UK this week will make a significant impact on the spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus as it is the most accessible shot approved so far and is likely to remain that way.

- This is significant for India, as the Pune-based Serum Institute of India (SII) has tied
up with AstraZeneca to deploy the vaccine in the country.

How this vaccine works?
This new vaccine is a viral vector vaccine, which works in a different way than the mRNA vaccines that have already been approved.

- A viral vector vaccine uses another non-replicating virus to deliver SARS-CoV-2 genes, in the form of DNA, into human cells, where viral proteins are produced to induce protective immune responses.

Types of vaccines:
1. Inactivated: These are vaccines made by using particles of the Covid-19 virus that were killed, making them unable to infect or replicate. Injecting particular doses of these particles serves to build immunity by helping the body create antibodies against the dead virus.
2. Non-replicating viral vector: It uses a weakened, genetically modified version of a different virus to carry the Covid-19 spike protein.
3. Protein subunit: This vaccine uses a part of the virus to build an immune response in a targeted fashion. In this case, the part of the virus being targeted would be the spike protein.
4. RNA: Such vaccines use the messenger RNA (mRNA) molecules that tell cells what proteins to build. The mRNA, in this case, is coded to tell the cells to recreate the spike protein. Once it is injected, the cells will use the mRNA’s instructions, creating copies of the spike protein, which in turn is expected to prompt the immune cells to create antibodies to fight it.
5. DNA: These vaccines use genetically engineered DNA molecules that, again, are coded with the antigen against which the immune response is to be built.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. How SARS-CoV-2 spreads in the body?
2. What are T-cells?
3. Types of vaccines.
4. How ChAdOx1 Covid-19 vaccine was made?
5. How vaccines work?

Topi's: Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential; citizens charters, transparency & accountability and institutional and other measures.

1. IAF moves court against RTI disclosure:

Context:
The Indian Air Force (IAF) has moved the Delhi High Court challenging a Central Information Commission (CIC) direction to provide an RTI activist details regarding every foreign visit undertaken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on IAF aircraft.

What's the issue?
- CIC had directed the Indian Air Force (IAF) to disclose details of the Prime Minister’s entourage under the RTI Act (Right to Information Act, 2005).
- The IAF, in its plea, said the information sought to be disclosed was “extremely sensitive in nature” as it related to details of the Prime Minister’s security apparatus. It can potentially affect the sovereignty and integrity of India.

www.insightsonindia.com
What information has been sought?
The information sought includes details related to the entire entourage, names of Special Protection Group (SPG) personnel accompanying the Hon'ble Prime Minister of India on foreign tours for his personal safety.

Is there any exemption in this regard?
- IAF says, the information sought is exempted from disclosure under Section 8(1)(a), 8(1)(e) & 8(1)(g) of the RTI Act.
- Besides, SPG is explicitly exempted from the purview of the Right to Information Act, 2005 by the virtue of section 24(1) read with the Schedule II of the Right to Information Act, 2005.

Key Provisions:
1. **Section 24 of the RTI Act 2005** lays down that this law is not applicable to the intelligence and security organisations specified in the Second Schedule. However, the only exception these organisations have is for information on allegations of corruption and human rights violations.
2. **Second Schedule**: It includes 26 intelligence and security agencies under its ambit. Some of them are (i) Intelligence Bureau (IB), (ii) Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) of the Cabinet Secretariat (iii) Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), (iv) Special Frontier Force (SFF), (v) Border Security Force (BSF) (vi) National Security Guards (NSG) and (Vii) Assam Rifles.
3. **Section 8 of the RTI**: It deals with exemption from disclosure of information under this legislation. As per this section there shall be no obligation on Government to provide any citizen information, disclosure which will affect (i) India’s sovereignty and integrity, (ii) security, (iii) strategic, scientific or economic interests of the state and (iv) relations with foreign States or (v) will lead to incitement of an offence.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Definition of Public Authority under the act.
2. Exceptions under the act.
3. About Chief Information Commissioner.
4. State Information Commissioners.
5. Public Information Officers.

Mains Link:

InstaLinks:

2. Justice Jain committee:
- **Constituted by the Supreme Court** in September 2018.
- Its work is to unravel the rogue officials responsible for the infamous ISRO “frame-up” case of 1994, which destroyed the life and reputation of Nambi Narayanan, one of the country’s prominent space scientists.

What’s the issue?
At the time of his arrest on November 30, 1994, Mr. Narayanan was working on cryogenic engine technology at the premier Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- The police investigators had accused him of passing on documents and drawings of ISRO relating to Viking/Vikas engine technology, cryogenic engine technology and PSLV flight data/drawings to Pakistan.

What happened at the Supreme Court?
- The Supreme Court dismissed the case in 2018 as a criminal frame-up based on “some kind fancy or notion”. It said Mr. Narayanan’s career was “smothered.”
- The CBI, which took over the probe from the Kerala Police, had promptly filed a closure report in 1996. But Mr. Narayanan fought on to bring his accusers to justice.
- The apex court, in its 2018 judgment, had called the treatment meted out to the scientist while he was in custody “psycho-pathological”.
- The court ordered the Kerala government to pay Mr. Narayanan ₹50 lakh in compensation, though it said mere money was not enough to make up for the torture the scientist had endured for 24 years.
Also, the scientist had said that the prosecution launched by the Kerala police had a “catastrophic effect” on his career and personal life, besides setting back the technological advancement in space research.

Cryogenic technology:

- Cryogenic technology involves the use of rocket propellants at extremely low temperatures.
- The combination of liquid oxygen and liquid hydrogen offers the highest energy efficiency for rocket engines that need to produce large amounts of thrust.
- Specific impulse (a measure of the efficiency) achievable with cryogenic propellants (liquid Hydrogen and liquid Oxygen) is much higher compared to earth storable liquid and solid propellants, giving it a substantial payload advantage.

Why this technology is important for India?

1. India is only the 6th country to develop the cryogenic engine after the USA, France, Japan, China and Russia.
2. It is important technology for India because India could launch heavy satellites (of weight more than 2500-3000kg) with the help of Cryogenic engines and its critical for the success of GSLV program.
3. The technology also holds importance in the context that India was denied this technology in 1990s by the USA when India was making deal with Russian agency to transfer of technology.
4. With this technology India does not have to depend on the other space agencies.
5. It will not just help ISRO probe deeper into space but will also bring it extra revenue, enabling it to make commercial launches of heavier satellites. By providing the cost effective and reliable services India can tap the Asian and African space markets, which are looking towards India on this front.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. What is Cryogenic Technology?
2. How it works?
4. Challenges involved.
5. Countries having this technology.

Mains Link:
Discuss the challenges involved in the development of cryogenic technology.
Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GF182CTR6.1&imageview=0.

Topics: Role of civil services in a democracy.

1. Mamata refuses to allow 3 IPS officers to go to Centre:

Context:
The Union government has demanded that the West Bengal relieve three serving IPS officers for Central deputation. However, the state has expressed its strong reservations against the move.

- The state has described the Centre’s order as a “colourable exercise of power and a blatant misuse of emergency provision of the IPS Cadre Rule, 1954”.

Background:
Despite the objection of the State government, the Union government called the three IPS officers on central deputation. The officers were deployed for the security of BJP president J.P. Nadda when his convoy was attacked on December 10.

What the rules say?

- For the premier civil services — IAS, IPS and Indian Forest Service — officers of the state cadre are allotted by the Centre from a pool of officers.
- From time to time, a certain number of officers are sent on central deputation.
- The Home Ministry is the authority in control of IPS cadre, the Department of Personnel and Training for the IAS cadre, and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change for IFS cadre.

Who can take action?
The Centre can take no action against civil service officials who are posted under the state government as per Rule 7 of the All India Services (Discipline and Appeal) Rules, 1969.
For any action to be taken on an officer of the All India Services (IAS, IPS, IFS), the state and the Centre both need to agree.

Rule 6(1) of the Indian Police Service (Cadre) Rules, 1954 says about deputation: “in case of any disagreement, the matter shall be decided by the central Government and the state government or state governments concerned shall give effect to the decision of the Central Government.”

Implications:
Under the Home Ministry’s deputation policy for IPS officers, if an officer on offer is selected for a Central posting and does not report either on his own or at the instance of the State Government, he would be debarred for consideration for a post under the Government of India for a period of five years.

- Officers, who have already been debarred, should not be offered before the debarment period is over.
- Being debarred from central deputation, however, hardly bothers an official if they prefer to work in their state.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Rules related to All India Services.
2. Responsibility to manage cadres of IAS, IPS and IFS.
3. Civil services board.
4. Who has powers to take action against civil service officials who are posted under the state government?

Mains Link:
5. What is Home Ministry’s deputation policy for IPS officers?

Discuss what are emergency provisions under the IPS Cadre Rule, 1954.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G6T8317CU.1&imageview=0.

Topics: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

1. Bangladesh begins shifting Rohingya:

Context:
Bangladesh has begun transferring hundreds of Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char (a low-lying island in an area prone to cyclones and floods), with rights groups alleging that people were being coerced into leaving.

What’s the concern?
The island was formed from a build-up of silt in the Bay of Bengal only 20 years ago, and concerns have been consistently raised about Bhasan Char’s exposure to extreme weather and distance from the mainland in emergencies since Bangladesh first raised the idea in 2015.

Who are Rohingyas?
- They are an Ethnic group, mostly Muslims. They were not granted full citizenship by Myanmar.
- They were classified as “resident foreigners or associate citizens”.
- Ethnically they are much closer to Indo-Aryan people of India and Bangladesh than to the Sino-Tibetans of the Country.

Described by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres as “one of, if not the, most discriminated people in the world”.

Where are they now?
- About 860,000 Rohingya live in the world’s largest and most densely populated refugee camp in southern Bangladesh.
- The Myanmar and Bangladesh governments continue to negotiate terms for the repatriation of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar.
- According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, there are approximately 40,000 Rohingyas living in India.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Who are Rohingyas?
2. Location of Rakhine State.
3. About the International Court of Justice.

Mains Link:
4. ICJ vs International Criminal Court.
5. What is Home Ministry’s deputation policy for IPS officers?

Discuss what are emergency provisions under the IPS Cadre Rule, 1954.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G6T8317CU.1&imageview=0.
2. Dhaka moves refugees to Bhashan Char island:

Context:
Bangladesh has started moving Rohingya refugees to a controversial flood-prone Bhashan Char island in the Bay of Bengal despite opposition from rights activists.

What’s the concern?
The island was formed from a build-up of silt in the Bay of Bengal only 20 years ago, and concerns have been consistently raised about Bhasan Char’s exposure to extreme weather and distance from the mainland in emergencies since Bangladesh first raised the idea in 2015.

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InstaLinks:
Prelims Link: 1. Who are Rohingyas?
2. Location of Rakhine State.
3. About the International Court of Justice.
4. ICJ vs International Criminal Court.

Mains Link: Write a note on Rohingya Crisis.

3. China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC):

Context:
China defends progress of Pak. corridor and rejects reports of seeking additional guarantees from Islamabad before sanctioning a loan for CPEC.

About CPEC:
The CPEC is the flagship project of the multi-billion-dollar Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a pet project of Chinese President Xi Jinping, aimed at enhancing Beijing’s influence around the world through China-funded infrastructure projects.
- The 3,000 km-long China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) consists of highways, railways, and pipelines.
CPEC eventually aims at linking the city of Gwadar in South Western Pakistan to China’s North Western region Xinjiang through a vast network of highways and railways.

The proposed project will be financed by heavily-subsidised loans, that will be disbursed to the Government of Pakistan by Chinese banks.

But, why is India concerned?

It passes through PoK.

- CPEC rests on a Chinese plan to secure and shorten its supply lines through Gwadar with an enhanced presence in the Indian Ocean. Hence, it is widely believed that upon CPEC’s fruition, an extensive Chinese presence will undermine India’s influence in the Indian Ocean.
- It is also being contended that if CPEC were to successfully transform the Pakistan economy that could be a “red rag” for India which will remain at the receiving end of a wealthier and stronger Pakistan.
- Besides, India shares a great deal of trust deficit with China and Pakistan and has a history of conflict with both. As a result, even though suggestions to re-approach the project pragmatically have been made, no advocate has overruled the principle strands of contention that continue to mar India’s equations with China and Pakistan.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. What is CPEC?
2. What is BRI initiative?
3. What is string of pearls initiative?
4. Where Gilgit- Baltistan?
5. Important ports in Pakistan and Iran.

Mains Link:
Discuss India’s concerns on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework. Suggest how India should tackle the challenges posed by this alliance?

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G3A847G8G.1&imageview=0.

Topics: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

1. Quad is U.S. anti-China game: Russia:

Context:
Russia has called the four-nation quadrilateral strategic dialogue or Quad as a “devious policy” by western powers to engage India in “anti-China games”.

What’s the issue?
It expressed concerns about the U.S. Indo-Pacific policy and criticised the Quad. Also, for the first time it has suggested that India-Russia ties could be affected by it.

What are Russia’s concerns?
- India has become an object of the western countries’ persistent, aggressive and devious policy as they are trying to engage it in anti-China games by promoting Indo-Pacific strategies, the so-called “Quad”.
- At the same time the West is attempting to undermine Russia's close partnership and privileged relations with India. This is the goal of the U.S.’s very tough pressure on New Delhi in the MTC [military and technical cooperation] area.
- The incoming Biden administration is also expected to press harder on India against its purchase of the S-400 anti-missile system from Russia, which could attract U.S. sanctions.
- Overall, the U.S. and European countries are trying to “restore” the unipolar model with U.S. leadership.

What is Quad grouping?
The quadrilateral security dialogue includes Japan, India, United States and Australia.
- All four nations find a common ground of being the democratic nations and common interests of unhindered maritime trade and security.

Genesis:
www.insightsonindia.com
The grouping traces its genesis to 2004 when the four countries came together to coordinate relief operations in the aftermath of the tsunami.

- It then met for the first time in 2007 on the sidelines of the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit.
- The intention was to enhance maritime cooperation between the four nations.

**Significance of the grouping:**

- Quad is an opportunity for like-minded countries to share notes and collaborate on projects of mutual interest.
- Members share a vision of an open and free Indo-Pacific. Each is involved in development and economic projects as well as in promoting maritime domain awareness and maritime security.
- It is one of the many avenues for interaction among India, Australia, Japan and the US and should not be seen in an exclusive context.

**What are China’s views on the Quad?**

There is a general understanding that the Quad would not take on a military dimension against any country. The strategic community in China, nevertheless, had branded it an emerging “Asian NATO”.

Notably, Japanese PM Shinzo Abe’s “Confluence of Two Seas” address to the Indian Parliament gave a fresh impetus to the Quad concept. This recognised the economic rise of India.

**Why there is a need for formalisation?**

Despite renewed efforts, the QUAD has faced criticism over its lack of formal structure. There have been calls for institutionalisation, a formal agreement to transform the group into a formidable anti-China bloc.

A lot has changed over the years. Each member state has faced the heat of China’s increased aggression.

1. China has grown in might and influence and is keen on picking up fights.
2. After attempting to influence Australia’s domestic policies, it slapped punitive tariffs on the country.
3. It is engaged in what has become a routine border confrontation with India.
4. China has flared up territorial disputes with Japan with regards to the Senkaku Islands and is battling a fully-fledged trade war with the United States.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. Quad- composition.
2. When was it first proposed?
3. Countries and important islands in the Indian Ocean region.
5. Important seas and straits in the region.

**Mains Link:**
A formal revival and re-invigoration of the Quad is called for to maintain peace and tranquillity and to ensure observance of the UN Law of the Seas. Examine.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G9T824GAS.1&imageview=0.

2. South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC):

**Context:**
36th Charter Day anniversary of SAARC observed recently.

- The Charter establishing the Association was signed on December 8, 1985 by the SAARC Heads of States/Governments during first Summit meeting in Dhaka.

**What is SAARC? When was it established?**
Afghanistan became the newest member of SAARC at the 13th annual summit in 2005. The Headquarters and Secretariat of the Association are at Kathmandu, Nepal.

**Importance of SAARC:**
1. SAARC comprises 3% of the world’s area, 21% of the world’s population and 3.8% (US$2.9 trillion) of the global economy.
2. It is the world’s most densely populated region and one of the most fertile areas.
3. SAARC countries have common tradition, dress, food and culture and political aspects thereby synergizing their actions.
4. All the SAARC countries have common problems and issues like poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, natural disasters, internal conflicts, industrial and technological backwardness, low GDP and poor socio-economic condition.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. SAARC vs BIMSTEC.
2. BIMIN
3. Motor Vehicle Agreement.
4. What is CPEC?
5. Belt and Road initiative.

Mains Link:
Discuss how SAARC revival helps India deal with China.
Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GOI820R8G.1&imageview=0.

3. India, U.S. mull over unfinished work:

Context:
As Trump tenure winds down, deals in trade, sanctions, nuclear energy hang fire between India and the US. The unfinished businesses include:
1. No blanket waiver of the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) sanctions for buying Russian/Chinese arms.
2. Failure to reverse the decision to revoke India’s Generalised System of Preferences (GSP).
3. Commercial contract to be finalised for the decade-old MoU between U.S.-based Westinghouse Electric Company and Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL) to build six reactors in Andhra Pradesh.

Achievements so far:
1. The growing defence partnership, enhanced military exchanges bolstered by the signing of four foundational agreements: GSOMIA, LEMOA, COMCASA and BECA.
2. U.S. grant of the STA-1 Strategic Trade Authorisation to India, capped by intelligence sharing and quick procurements during the ongoing standoff between Indian and Chinese troops at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).
3. Crystallisation of the “Quad” arrangement.

What is the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP)?
- It is a U.S. trade program designed to promote economic growth in the developing world by providing preferential duty-free entry for up to 4,800 products from 129 designated beneficiary countries and territories.
- GSP was instituted on January 1, 1976, by the Trade Act of 1974.
- GSP has been given on non-reciprocal basis. Yet the US has linked it with market access and tariff reduction which is against the basic tenets of GSP.

When was it withdrawn?
The privilege was withdrawn by outgoing President Donald Trump’s administration in Washington DC in June 2019 and India has been prodding the United States to restore it.

Benefits of GSP:
www.insightsonindia.com
1. Indian exporters benefit indirectly – through the benefit that accrues to the importer by way of reduced tariff or duty free entry of eligible Indian products.
2. Reduction or removal of import duty on an Indian product makes it more competitive to the importer – other things (e.g. quality) being equal.
3. This tariff preference helps new exporters to penetrate a market and established exporters to increase their market share and to improve upon the profit margins, in the donor country.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About GSP.
2. Countries covered under this program.
3. When was India removed?
4. Benefits under the program.
5. What is quad?
6. Four foundational agreements.

Mains Link:
What are the benefits of the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) trade privilege for India? Discuss.
Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GGD83BDCM.1&imageview=0.

4. Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI):
Context:
Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan has been nominated by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) as a member on the GAVI Board. Dr. Harsh Vardhan will be representing the South East Area Regional Office (SEARO)/ Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) constituency on the GAVI Board.

GAVI Board:
- The GAVI Board is responsible for strategic direction and policymaking, oversees the operations of the Vaccine Alliance and monitors programme implementation.
- With membership drawn from a range of partner organisations, as well as experts from the private sector, the Board provides a forum for balanced strategic decision making, innovation and partner collaboration.

What is GAVI?
Created in 2000, Gavi is an international organisation – a global Vaccine Alliance, bringing together public and private sectors with the shared goal of creating equal access to new and underused vaccines for children living in the world’s poorest countries.

Members:
Gavi brings together developing country and donor governments, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the World Bank, the vaccine industry in both industrialised and developing countries, research and technical agencies, civil society, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and other private philanthropists.

Main activities:
1. GAVI’s strategy supports its mission to save children’s lives and protect people’s health by increasing access to immunisation in poor countries.
2. It contributes to achieving the United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals by focusing on performance, outcomes and results.
3. Its partners provide funding for vaccines and intellectual resources for care advancement.
4. They contribute, also, to strengthening the capacity of the health system to deliver immunisation and other health services in a sustainable manner.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Members of GAVI?
2. Largest contributors to GAVI?
3. Who organised global vaccine summit recently?  
4. How much has India pledged to GAVI?  
5. What is a vaccine?  
6. What are different types of vaccines?  

Mains Link:  
Discuss the significance of GAVI.  
Link:https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GJN84AU9S.1&imageview=0.

Topics: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests, Indian diaspora.

1. U.S., China dominate arms market: report:

Context:  
Stockholm International Peace Research Institute has released a report on arms market across the world.

Key findings:  
1. The U.S. arms industry accounted for 61% of sales by the world’s “Top 25” manufacturers last year, ahead of China’s 15.7%.
2. Total sales by the “Top 25” rose by 8.5% to $361 billion, or 50 times the annual budget of the UN’s peacekeeping operations.
3. China and the United States are the two biggest states in terms of global arms spending.
4. For the first time, a company from the West Asia made it into the “Top 25”: EDGE, of the United Arab Emirates, was formed by the consolidation of some 25 defence entities in 2019.

What is SIPRI?  
Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) established in 1966 is an independent international institute dedicated to research into conflict, armaments, arms control and disarmament.  
● Based in Stockholm the Institute provides data, analysis and recommendations, based on open sources, to policymakers, researchers, media and the interested public.

InstaLinks:  
Prelims Link:  
1. What is SIPRI?  
2. How many nuclear armed states are there in the world?  
3. 2020 nuclear warhead inventories.  
4. Comparison with previous report findings?  
5. Top arms exporting countries.  

Mains Link:  
Briefly discuss why it is important to become self-reliant on arms production.  
Link:https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GLM81TB2S.1&imageview=0.

2. What is the controversy about France’s new security law?

Context:  
France government introduced a controversial security bill in parliament that seeks to provide greater powers and protections for police officers.

Controversial provisions:  
Enabling the police to organise ground and air mass surveillance, while at the same time restricting the filming of police officers.
● Articles 21 and 22 of the proposed “global security” law allow the police and the gendarmes (paramilitary forces) to use body cameras and drones to film citizens, and allow the recorded footage to be live streamed to the command post.
● Article 24 penalises publishing “the image of the face or any other element of identification” of a police or paramilitary official who is acting in “a police operation”, if the dissemination is done with “the intent of harming their physical or mental integrity”.

What are the opponents of the new law saying?  
Article 24 would make it harder to cover public events and record instances of police violence, thus making it more difficult to hold officers accountable.
What have the bill’s supporters said?
The government has insisted that it does not intend to target press freedoms, and that the new law is aimed at protecting police officers and their families from online trolling and harassment when off duty.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link: Just have a brief overview of the law and the country which enacted this law.
Mains Link: Discuss the concerns associated with this law.

3. Pakistan, China violate religious freedom: U.S:

Context:
The US State Department has placed various countries in different lists pursuant to the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA).

Key Points:
1. Pakistan and China among eight other countries that are of particular concern (CPC) for violation of religious freedom. Others include- Myanmar, Eritrea, Iran, Nigeria, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.
2. Comoros, Cuba, Nicaragua and Russia on a Special Watch List (SWL) for governments that have engaged in or tolerated severe violations of religious freedom.
Notably, the State Department did not accept the USCIRF recommendation that India, Russia, Syria and Vietnam be also designated as CPCs.

WHAT IS THE U. S. COMMISSION ON INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM (USCIRF)?
- USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan, U.S. federal government commission created by the 1998 International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) that monitors the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad.
- USCIRF uses international standards to monitor religious freedom violations globally, and makes policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN USCIRF AND THE STATE DEPARTMENT’S OFFICE OF INTERNATIONAL RELIGIOUS FREEDOM?
USCIRF is an independent, bipartisan federal government entity, while the Office of International Religious Freedom (IRF) — also established under IRFA—is part of the U.S. State Department.
Both USCIRF and the State Department release annual reports on international religious freedom, but each has different purposes.
- The State Department’s report documents religious freedom violations in every country in the world.
- USCIRF’s Annual Report, by statute, recommends countries to be designated as “countries of particular concern” which the Executive Branch must consider.

Background:
Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides that “everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest this religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. What is USCIRF?
2. What are countries of particular concern?
3. About the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
www.insightsonindia.com
How successful Indian polity has been in maintaining communal harmony in the state? Discuss.

4. What is the S-400 deal? Why is India cautious as US sanctions Turkey?

Context:
The United States has imposed sanctions (Under CAATSA) on Turkey over Ankara’s acquisition of Russian S-400 air defence systems.

What is the S-400 air defence missile system? Why does India need it?

- The S-400 Triumph is a mobile, surface-to-air missile system (SAM) designed by Russia.
- It is the most dangerous operationally deployed modern long-range SAM (MLR SAM) in the world, considered much ahead of the US-developed Terminal High Altitude Area Defense system (THAAD).
- India’s acquisition is crucial to counter attacks in a two-front war, including even high-end F-35 US fighter aircraft.

What is CAATSA, and how did the S-400 deal fall foul of this Act?

Countering America’s Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)’s core objective is to counter Iran, Russia and North Korea through punitive measures.

- The Act primarily deals with sanctions on Russian interests such as its oil and gas industry, defence and security sector, and financial institutions, in the backdrop of its military intervention in Ukraine and its alleged meddling in the 2016 US Presidential elections.

But why does the US have a law like CAATSA to begin with?

- Following the US elections and allegations of Russian meddling some call it collusion in the US elections, the strain between Washington and Moscow has reached a new level.
- Angry with Moscow’s actions around the world, US lawmakers are hoping to hit Russia where it hurts most, its defense and energy business, through CAATSA.

And what does it mean for India’s defence landscape?

As per the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Arms Transfer Database, during the period 2010-17, Russia was the top arms supplier to India.

- Most of India’s weapons are of Soviet/Russian origin – nuclear submarine INS Chakra, the Kilo-class conventional submarine, the supersonic Brahmos cruise missile, the MiG 21/27/29 and Su-30 MKI fighters, IL-76/78 transport planes, T-72 and T-90 tanks, Mi-series of helicopters, and Vikramaditya aircraft carrier

Therefore, CAATSA impacts Indo-US ties and dents the image of the US as a reliable partner.

While India has got a waiver from the outgoing Trump administration on the S-400 air defence system, Delhi hopes that the incoming Biden administration would not work towards reversing the decision.
1. CAATSA is associated with?
2. Powers of US president under CAATSA.
3. Types of sanctions that can be imposed.
4. Significant defence deals between India and Russia.
5. Overview of Iran Nuclear deal.

5. Who are Uighurs?

Context:
Hundreds of thousands of ethnic minority labourers in China’s northwestern Xinjiang region are being forced to pick cotton through a coercive state-run scheme, a report has said.

- This report is likely to heap more pressure on global brands such as Nike, Gap and Adidas, which have been accused of using Uighur forced labour in their textile supply chains.

Background:
- Rights activists have said Xinjiang is home to a vast network of extrajudicial internment camps that have imprisoned at least one million people, which China has defended as vocational training centres to counter extremism.

Who are Uighurs?
- Uighurs are a Muslim minority community concentrated in the country’s northwestern Xinjiang province.
- They claim closer ethnic ties to Turkey and other central Asian countries than to China, by brute — and brutal — force.

Why is China targeting the Uighurs?

Xinjiang is technically an autonomous region within China — its largest region, rich in minerals, and sharing borders with eight countries, including India, Pakistan, Russia and Afghanistan.

- Over the past few decades, as economic prosperity has come to Xinjiang, it has brought with it in large numbers the majority Han Chinese, who have cornered the better jobs, and left the Uighurs feeling their livelihoods and identity were under threat.
- This led to sporadic violence, in 2009 culminating in a riot that killed 200 people, mostly Han Chinese, in the region’s capital Urumqi. And many other violent incidents have taken place since then.
- Beijing also says Uighur groups want to establish an independent state and, because of the Uighurs’ cultural ties to their neighbours, leaders fear that elements in places like Pakistan may back a separatist movement in Xinjiang.

Therefore, the Chinese policy seems to have been one of treating the entire community as suspect, and launching a systematic project to chip away at every marker of a distinct Uighur identity.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Who are Uighurs?
2. Where is Xinjiang?
3. Who are Han Chinese?

6. U.S. puts India on ‘currency manipulators’ monitoring list:

Context:
The U.S. Treasury has labeled Switzerland and Vietnam as currency manipulators.

- It has also added three new names- Taiwan, Thailand and India- to a watch list of countries it suspects of taking measures to devalue their currencies against the dollar.

To be labeled a manipulator by the U.S. Treasury:
- Countries must at least have a $20 billion-plus bilateral trade surplus with the U.S.
- Foreign currency intervention exceeding 2% of gross domestic product.
A global current account surplus exceeding 2% of GDP.

Reasons:
- In the year through June 2020 Switzerland and Vietnam had intervened heavily in currency markets to prevent effective balance of payments adjustments.
- India and Singapore had intervened in the foreign exchange market in a “sustained, asymmetric manner” but did not meet other requirements to warrant designation as manipulators.

Implications:
While the designation of a country as a currency manipulator does not immediately attract any penalties, it tends to dent the confidence about a country in the global financial markets.

What is currency manipulation and who determines it?
- The US Department of the Treasury publishes a semi-annual report in which the developments in global economic and exchange rate policies are reviewed.
- If a US trade partner meets three assessment criteria, the US labels it a currency manipulator.
- The US Treasury department defines currency manipulation as when countries deliberately influence the exchange rate between their currency and the US dollar to gain “unfair competitive advantage in international trade”.

InstaLinks:

**Prelims Link:**
1. US Currency Manipulators list.
2. Countries in watch list.
3. Criteria.

**4. Implications.**
5. India’s position.

**7. US Congress passes Tibetan Policy and Support Act:**

**Context:**
The legislation was recently passed.

**Highlights of the new law:**
- It reaffirms the rights of the Tibetan Buddhists to choose the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama without any interference of China.
- The legislation will empower the US Government to impose sanctions on the Chinese Government officials, who might try to interfere in the process of selecting the next incarnation of the Dalai Lama, just as they had done in case of Panchen Lama.
- It also acknowledged the legitimacy of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile elected by the exiled community as well as the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA).
- It seeks to introduce key provisions aimed at protecting the environment and water resources on the Tibetan Plateau.

**Response:**
It has been hailed by the Tibetans, who were concerned over the possibility of the Chinese Government making an attempt to install someone loyal to it as the 15th Dalai Lama after the death of the incumbent and use him as a puppet to fizzle out the global campaign against its occupation of Tibet.

**Background:**
The incumbent and the 14th Dalai Lama has been living in exile in India ever since his 1959 escape from Tibet, which had been occupied by the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) in 1950-51.
- He has been leading the movement for “genuine autonomy” for Tibet and the Tibetans.
- But, the speculation is rife over the fate of the movement beyond his lifetime.

**About the Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile (TPIE):**
The Tibetan Parliament-in-Exile (TPIE) has its headquarters in Dharamsala, in the Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh.
• The 16th TPiE had 45 members:
  • 10 representatives from each of the traditional provinces of Tibetan – U-Tsang, Dhotoe and Dhomey;
  • Two from each of the four schools of Tibetan Buddhism and the pre-Buddhist Bon religion;
  • Two representing each of the Tibetan Communities in North America and Europe.
  • One from Australasia and Asia (excluding India, Nepal and Bhutan).

What does the Tibetan Constitution say?
The Central Tibetan Administration exists and functions on the basis of the Constitution of the Tibetan government called ‘The Charter of the Tibetans in Exile’.
  • In 1991, The Constitution Redrafting Committee instituted by the Dalai Lama prepared the Charter for Tibetans in exile.
  • The Dalai Lama approved it on June 28, 1991.

What is Kashag?
• The Kashag (Cabinet) is Central Tibetan Administration’s highest executive office and comprise seven members.

8. Post- Brexit deal:
Context: The UK and European Union have finally agreed a deal that will define their future relationship.

Background: Ever since the UK left the the EU on 31 January, both sides have been talking about what the new rules should be.

What do we know about the deal? The deal contains new rules for how the UK and EU will live, work and trade together.
  • No taxes on each other’s goods when they cross borders (known as tariffs).
  • No limits on the amount of things which can be traded (known as quotas).
  • Tariffs: Tariff-free and quota-free access to one of the world’s biggest markets is the backbone of the Brexit deal and goes beyond the EU’s deals with Canada or Japan.
  • Trade: There will be mutual recognition of trusted trader programmes. This means UK producers will have to comply with both UK and EU standards.
  • Professional qualifications: There will be no more automatic recognition for doctors, nurses, architects, dentists, pharmacists, vets, engineers. They will now have to seek recognition in the member state they wish to practise in.
  • Mobility – freedom of movement: UK nationals no longer have the freedom to work, study, start a business or live in the EU. Visas will be required for stays over 90 days.
  • Fisheries: The UK will leave the common fisheries policy.

Why did the deal take so long?
Because so much was at stake.
The EU is the UK’s nearest and biggest trading partner, The UK government says the deal covers trade that was worth £668bn in 2019.
While the UK was in the EU, companies could buy and sell goods across EU borders without paying tariffs.
  • Without the deal, businesses would have had to start paying these taxes, which would have added to their costs.
No deal would have also meant even more border checks, which could have caused delays for lorries transporting products.

What happens next?
- Even though the deal has been agreed, it still needs to be made law.
- For that to happen it must be looked at and approved by both the UK and European parliaments.

What are the EU and Brexit?
The EU is made up of 27 European countries.
EU citizens are free to live and work in other EU countries, and firms in those countries can buy and sell each other’s goods without checks or extra taxes at borders.
- The UK was the first country to leave the EU and this was known as Brexit - British exit.
- Brexit happened because a public vote - or referendum - was held in June 2016, to decide whether the UK should be in the EU- Leave won by 52% to 48%

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link and Mains Link:
- Brexit- meaning, key features and impact on India.

Topics: Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.
1. Financial Action Task Force (FATF):

Why in News?
FATF recently held its annual joint experts’ meet.
- It was attended by participants from various government agencies all over the world and international bodies such as the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and Interpol.
- The FATF said it attaches great importance to effective information sharing, which is one of the cornerstones of a well-functioning AML/CFT [Anti-Money Laundering/Combating the Financing of Terrorism] framework.

About FATF:
The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) is an inter-governmental body established in 1989 on the initiative of the G7.
- It is a “policy-making body” which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas.
- The FATF Secretariat is housed at the OECD headquarters in Paris.

Roles and functions:
www.insightsonindia.com
1. Initially it was established to examine and develop measures to combat money laundering.
2. In October 2001, the FATF expanded its mandate to incorporate efforts to combat terrorist financing, in addition to money laundering.
3. In April 2012, it added efforts to counter the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

**Composition:**
The FATF currently comprises 37 member jurisdictions and 2 regional organisations, representing most major financial centres in all parts of the globe. It also has observers and associate members.

**InstaLinks:**
**Prelims Link:**
1. G7 vs G8 vs G20.
2. Black vs Grey list.
3. Are FATF’s decisions binding on member countries?
4. Who heads the FATF?
5. Where is its secretariat?

**Mains Link:**
What is the mandate and objectives of the Financial Action Task Force? Discuss.

2. Iran nuclear deal:

**Context:**
Biden sets new demands for return to Iran nuclear deal.

**What are the demands?**
Iran would have to address its “malign” regional activities through proxies in Lebanon, Iraq, Syria and Yemen in the talks that would have to include its Arab neighbours like Saudi Arabia.

**Background:**
President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the deal in 2018 and has reimposed crippling sanctions on Iran as part of a “maximum pressure” campaign against the US's arch enemy.

**About the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA:**
Iran agreed to rein in its nuclear programme in a 2015 deal struck with the US, UK, Russia, China, France and Germany.
The 2015 nuclear deal gave Iran relief from sanctions in return for curbs on its nuclear programme. Under the deal:
1. Iran agreed to rein in its nuclear programme in a 2015 deal struck with the US, UK, Russia, China, France and Germany.
2. Tehran agreed to significantly cut its stores of centrifuges, enriched uranium and heavy-water, all key components for nuclear weapons.
3. The Joint Commission was established, with the negotiating parties all represented, to monitor implementation of the agreement.

**InstaLinks:**
**Prelims Link:**
1. What is JCPOA? Signatories.
2. Iran and its neighbours.
3. What is IAEA? Relation with the UN.
4. Members of IAEA.
5. Programs of IAEA.

7. What is Uranium Enrichment?

**Mains Link:**
Write a note on JCPOA.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G9L81BANFR.1&imageview=0.
3. UN removes cannabis from ‘most dangerous drug’ category, what this means?

Context:
The United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) voted to remove cannabis and cannabis resin from Schedule IV of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, decades after they were first placed on the list. With this, CND has chosen to affirm a World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendation from 2019 to remove cannabis from its ‘most dangerous’ category.

Who are for and against?
- India was part of the voting majority, along with the US and most European nations.
- China, Pakistan and Russia were among those who voted against, and Ukraine abstained.

The cannabis plant:
According to the WHO, cannabis is a generic term used to denote the several psychoactive preparations of the plant Cannabis sativa.
- The major psychoactive constituent in cannabis is Delta-9 tetrahydrocannabinol (THC).
- The Mexican name marijuana is frequently used in referring to cannabis leaves or other crude plant material in many countries.

How is it regulated?
- The Vienna-based CND, founded in 1946, is the UN agency mandated to decide on the scope of control of substances by placing them in the schedules of global drug control conventions.
- Cannabis has been on Schedule IV the most dangerous category of the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs for as long as the international treaty has existed.
- The law around cannabis in India can be found in the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985.

What this could mean for the cannabis industry?
The reclassification of cannabis by the UN agency, although significant, would not immediately change its status worldwide as long as individual countries continue with existing regulations.


4. ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus):

Context:
The 14th ASEAN Defence Ministers Meeting (ADMM) Plus was held virtually recently.

About ADMM-Plus:
Consistent with the ADMM guiding principles of open and outward looking, the 2nd ADMM in Singapore in 2007 adopted the Concept Paper to establish the ADMM-Plus.
The ADMM-Plus is a platform for ASEAN and its eight Dialogue Partners to strengthen security and defence cooperation for peace, stability, and development in the region.
- Eight Dialogue Partners are Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the USA (collectively referred to as the “Plus Countries”).

Agreed five areas of practical cooperation under this mechanism are:
- Maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, peacekeeping operations and military medicine.
In 2013, a new priority area of humanitarian mine action was agreed.

InstaLinks:
www.insightsonindia.com  Prelims Link:
InsightsIAS
1. What is ADMM?
2. What is ADMM plus?
3. Members.
4. Objectives.
5. Areas of Cooperation under ADMM- Plus.
   Link:https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GE5828LRLU.1&imageview=0.

5. What is the Opec+?

Context:
Russia expects to support an increase in oil production by OPEC+, of another 500,000 barrels per day (bpd) from February at next month’s summit of the leading global oil producers.

Background:
Russia, other leading oil producers and the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, a group known as OPEC+, agreed to reduce output to support the global oil market as the COVID-19 pandemic has weakened fuel demand.

- Since the agreement on a record global supply cut in April, OPEC+ has progressively reduced the cuts and is expected in January to release an extra 5,00,000 bpd into the market.

What is the Opec+?
- Opec+ refers to the alliance of crude producers, who have been undertaking corrections in supply in the oil markets since 2017.
- OPEC plus countries include Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman, Russia, South Sudan and Sudan.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Founder members of OPEC.
2. Top oil producers?
3. India’s crude oil imports?
4. Components and refining of crude oil.
5. Crude oil storage facilities in India?
6. Geographical location of OPEC members.
7. Type of Crude oil produced by OPEC and non-OPEC members.

8. What is OPEC+?

Mains Link:
How groups, such as OPEC, influence oil prices across the world? Discuss.

Link:https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GML83SKFL.1&imageview=0.
1. Economy firmly on the path of a V-shaped recovery, says govt:

Context:
The Ministry of Finance recently said that:
- India’s economy is firmly on the path of a V-shaped recovery after the collapse in the first quarter.
- Further improvement is expected in the third quarter, ‘notwithstanding some moderation’ in November’s indicators.
- The recovery is attributed to the unlocking process along with ‘astute’ stimulus measures.

What are the various Shapes of economic recovery?

1. **The Z-shaped recovery** is the most-optimistic scenario in which the economy quickly rises like a phoenix after a crash. It more than makes up for lost ground (think revenge-buying after the lockdowns are lifted) before settling back to the normal trend-line, thus forming a Z-shaped chart.

2. **In V-shaped recovery** the economy quickly recoups lost ground and gets back to the normal growth trend-line.

3. **A U-shaped recovery** is a scenario in which the economy, after falling, struggles and muddles around a low growth rate for some time, before rising gradually to usual levels.

4. **A W-shaped recovery** is a dangerous creature — growth falls and rises, but falls again before recovering yet again, thus forming a W-like chart.

5. **The L-shaped recovery** is the worst-case scenario, in which growth after falling, stagnates at low levels and does not recover for a long, long time.

6. **The J-shaped recovery** is a somewhat unrealistic scenario, in which growth rises sharply from the lows much higher than the trend-line and stays there.
2. Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY):

Context:
The Union Cabinet has given its approval for Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY) to boost employment in formal sector and incentivize creation of new employment opportunities during the Covid recovery phase under Atmanirbhar Bharat Package 3.0.

About the Atmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY):
- Under this, Government of India will provide subsidy for two years in respect of new employees engaged on or after 1st October, 2020 and up to 30th June, 2021.
- Government will pay both 12% employees’ contribution and 12% employers’ contribution i.e. 24% of wages towards EPF in respect of new employees in establishments employing up to 1000 employees for two years.
- Government will pay only employees’ share of EPF contribution i.e. 12% of wages in respect of new employees in establishments employing more than 1000 employee for two years.

Eligibility:
- An employee drawing monthly wage of less than Rs. 15000/- who was not working in any establishment registered with the Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) before 1st October, 2020 and did not have a Universal Account Number or EPF Member account number prior to 1st October 2020 will be eligible for the benefit.
- Any EPF member possessing Universal Account Number (UAN) drawing monthly wage of less than Rs 15000 who made exit from employment during Covid pandemic from March 1, 2020, to September 30, 2020, and did not join employment in any EPF covered establishment up to September 30 will also be eligible to avail benefit.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Benefits and eligibility under the programme.

Mains Link:
Discuss the need for and benefits of such Programmes.

3. What is asset under management (AUM)?

Context:
Heading for a contraction in the current fiscal, the first time in more than a decade, assets under management (AUM) of non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) are set to grow again at a relatively subdued 5-6% next fiscal.

- The turnaround will be led by larger entities with stronger parentage.

Challenges ahead:
Despite an estimated GDP growth of 10% next fiscal, the overall NBFC sector growth is likely to be slower because access to funding remains a challenge due to concerns about the impact of the pandemic on asset quality.

Additionally, competition is expected to be more intense from banks which are flush with low-cost deposits and better placed with improved capital buffer than in the previous years.

What are Assets under management?

It measures the total market value of all the financial assets which a financial institution manages on behalf of its clients and themselves.

- AUM is an indicator of the size and success of a given fund house.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is AUM?
2. Components.
3. Positive and negative AUM impacts.
4. What are NBFCs?

5. Types of NBFCs.
6. Banks vs NBFCs—similarities and differences.

What is RPL?

Context:

Skill India undertakes Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) for workers under Department of Panchayati Raj in Chandauli and Varanasi.

- The programme is being implemented under SANKALP Programme of Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- The implementing agency for the programme is National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).

Significance:

About 70% of our country’s population resides in rural India and hence the inclusion of gram panchayats is crucial for the success of District Skill Development Plans and will provide a huge fillip to the Skill India Mission.

- Through RPL, the aim is to align the competencies of the pre-existing workforce of the country to the standardized framework.
- Certification builds confidence, brings respect and provides recognition to the candidates, it has the potential to make skills aspirational.
- Supporting formalization of the informal learning of youth will supplement their efforts in finding sustainable livelihood opportunities and reduce inequalities based on privileging certain forms of knowledge over others.
Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) programme recognizes the value of learning acquired outside a formal setting and provides a government certificate for an individual’s skills. Candidates receive exposure to concepts of digital and financial literacy and an accidental insurance coverage for three years at free of cost. No fee is charged from a candidate for participating in the RPL program and every successfully certified candidate will receive INR 500. This initiative is part of a larger programme on ‘Skill Development Planning at the level of ‘Gram Panchayat’ that focuses on introducing Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in a structured manner in GPs of various districts across the country.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. What is RPL? 
2. What is SANKALP? 
3. About PMKVY.

Mains Link:
4. About NSDC.

5. CII, FICCI to seek a pause on wage code:

Context:
Representatives of industry bodies, including those from CII and FICCI, have requested the Labour Ministry to hold back implementation of new definition of wages, which would increase social security deductions and reduce the take-home pay of workers.

Need for:
The new definition of wages is part of the Code on Wages, 2019 passed by Parliament last year.

- The new definition would result in a major cut in take-home salaries and also place a burden on employers.

About the Code on Wages Act:
The code will amalgamate the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, the Minimum Wages Act, 1948, the Payment of Bonus Act, 1965, and the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976.

1. The wage code universalises the provisions of minimum wages and timely payment of wages to all employees, irrespective of the sector and wage ceiling.
2. It ensures the “right to sustenance” for every worker and intends to increase the legislative protection of minimum wage from existing about 40% to 100% workforce.
3. It also introduces the concept of statutory floor wage which will be computed based on minimum living conditions and extended qualitative living conditions across the country for all workers.
4. While fixing the minimum rate of wages, the central government shall divide the concerned geographical area into three categories – metropolitan area, non-metropolitan area and the rural area.
5. Wages include salary, allowance, or any other component expressed in monetary terms. This does not include bonus payable to employees or any travelling allowance, among others.
6. The minimum wages decided by the central or state governments must be higher than the floor wage.
7. Payment of wages: Wages will be paid in (i) coins, (ii) currency notes, (iii) by cheque, (iv) by crediting to the bank account, or (v) through electronic mode. The wage period will be fixed by the employer as either: (i) daily, (ii) weekly, (iii) fortnightly, or (iv) monthly.

Advisory boards:
The central and state governments will constitute advisory boards.

- The Central Advisory Board will consist of: (i) employers, (ii) employees (in equal number as employers), (iii) independent persons, and (iv) five representatives of state governments.
- State Advisory Boards will consist of employers, employees, and independent persons. Further, one-third of the total members on both the central and state Boards will be women. The Boards will advise the respective governments on various issues including: (i) fixation of minimum wages, and (ii) increasing employment opportunities for women.
InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Composition and functions of the Central Advisory Board established under Code on wages act.
2. What is a floor wage and who sets it?
3. Who decides the minimum wages?
4. What constitutes wages under the act?

Mains Link:
Write a note on code on wages Act, 2019.

6. Businesses with monthly turnover of over ₹50 lakh to pay at least 1% GST liability in cash:

Context:
Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has introduced Rule 86B in Goods and Services Tax (GST) rules which restricts use of input tax credit (ITC) for discharging GST liability to 99 per cent.

- As per the new rule, Businesses with monthly turnover of over ₹50 lakh will have to mandatorily pay at least 1 per cent of their GST liability in cash.

Exceptions under the new rule:
This restriction will not apply where the managing director or any partner have paid more than ₹1 lakh as income tax or the registered person has received a refund amount of more than ₹1 lakh in the preceding financial year on account of unutilised input tax credit.

Rationale behind this move?
The idea remains to prevent misutilisation of credit by businesses taking fake credits.

What’s the issue now?
There are fears that the mandatory cash payment would adversely affect small businesses, increase their working capital requirement and make GST a more complex indirect tax system.

What is Input Tax Credit (ITC)?
- It is the tax that a business pays on a purchase and that it can use to reduce its tax liability when it makes a sale.
- In simple terms, input credit means at the time of paying tax on output, you can reduce the tax you have already paid on inputs and pay the balance amount.

Exceptions: A business under composition scheme cannot avail of input tax credit. ITC cannot be claimed for personal use or for goods that are exempt.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. What is GST?
2. What is composition scheme?
3. What is Input tax credit?

Mains Link:
Discuss the significance of input tax credit.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MS hareArticle?OrgId=G9K843J19.1&imageview=0.

7. States borrow 43% more, get deeper in debt:

Context:
Borrowing 43% more in first 9 months, states fall deeper into debt trap.
- According to an analysis by rating agency ICRA, States had borrowed ₹3,87,400 crore in the first nine months of FY20.

Borrowing by States:
www.insightsonindia.com
Borrowing by the Government of India and Borrowing by States are defined under Article 292 and 293 of Constitution of India respectively.

Article 293 of Constitution of India "Borrowing by States":
1. Subject to the provisions of this article, the executive power of a State extends to borrowing within the territory of India upon the security of the Consolidated Fund of the State within such limits, if any, as may from time to time be fixed by the Legislature of such State by law and to the giving of guarantees within such limits, if any, as may be so fixed.
2. The Government of India may, subject to such conditions as may be laid down by or under any law made by Parliament, make loans to any State or, so long as any limits fixed under Article 292 are not exceeded, give guarantees in respect of loans raised by any State, and any sums required for the purpose of making such loans shall be charged on the Consolidated Fund of India.
3. A State may not without the consent of the Government of India raise any loan if there is still outstanding any part of a loan which has been made to the State by the Government of India or by its predecessor Government, or in respect of which a guarantee has been given by the Government of India or by its predecessor Government.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Article 293 is related to?
2. Do states need Centre’s permission to Borrow from markets?

8. What are Zero coupon bonds?

Context:
The government has used financial innovation to recapitalise Punjab & Sind Bank by issuing the lender Rs 5,500-crore worth of non-interest bearing bonds valued at par.
- These are special types of zero coupon bonds issued by the government after proper due diligence and are issued at par.

What are these special type of zero coupon bonds?
- These are “non-interest bearing, non-transferable special GOI securities”.
- They have a maturity of 10-15 years and issued specifically to Punjab & Sind Bank.
- These recapitalisation bonds are special types of bonds issued by the Central government specifically to a particular institution.
- It is not tradable, it is not transferable.
- It is held at the held-to-maturity (HTM) category of the bank as per the RBI guidelines. Since it is held to maturity, it is accounted at the face value (and) no mark-to-market will be there.

How do they differ from traditional bonds?
Though zero coupon, these bonds are different from traditional zero coupon bonds on one account — as they are being issued at par, there is no interest; in previous cases, since they were issued at discount, they technically were interest bearing.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. What are bonds?
2. What are government securities?
3. What are zero coupon bonds?
4. About HTM category.

Mains Link:
What are Zero Coupon Bonds? Discuss their significance.

Topics: Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

1. Government exploring setting up bad bank, all other options:
The government is exploring all options, including setting up of a bad bank, to improve the health of the country's banking sector, Economic Affairs Secretary Tarun Bajaj said recently.

Need for:
It is not just necessary but unavoidable in the present circumstances when NPAs are likely to balloon and much of the resolution will have to take place outside the IBC framework.

Concept of Bad Bank:
- A bad bank is a bank set up to buy the bad loans and other illiquid holdings of another financial institution.
- The entity holding significant nonperforming assets will sell these holdings to the bad bank at market price.
- By transferring such assets to the bad bank, the original institution may clear its balance sheet—although it will still be forced to take write-downs.

Why be concerned about bad loans?
1. Indian banks’ pile of bad loans is a huge drag on the economy.
2. It’s a drain on banks’ profits. Because profits are eroded, public sector banks (PSBs), where the bulk of the bad loans reside, cannot raise enough capital to fund credit growth.
3. Lack of credit growth, in turn, comes in the way of the economy’s return to an 8% growth trajectory. Therefore, the bad loan problem requires effective resolution.

Benefits:
1. This helps banks or FIs clear-off their balance sheets by transferring the bad loans and focus on its core business lending activities.
2. Large debtors have many creditors. Hence bad bank could solve the coordination problem, since debts would be centralised in one agency.
3. It can effect speedier settlements with borrowers by cutting out individual banks.
4. It can drive a better bargain with borrowers and take more stringent enforcement action against them.
5. It can raise money from institutional investors rather than looking only to the Government.

What are the Concerns or demerits of such banks?
Suppose, say for example, a bank sells bad loans. Then, it has to take a haircut because when Rs 100 goes bad, the actual amount that can be expected is lower than Rs 100 and that leads to haircut. When it takes haircut that will impact the P&L (Profit & Loss).

So, till that particular aspect is not addressed, creating a new structure may not be as potent in addressing the problem.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. What is an Asset Reconstruction Company?
2. What is a bad bank?
3. Who can set up a bad bank in India?
4. What are stressed assets?

Mains Link:
5. What are non performing assets?

Topics: Major crops cropping patterns in various parts of the country, different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; e-technology in the aid of farmers.

1. Why are the framers protesting and how the government should deal with protesting farmers?

Context:
Farmer protests against the three new agriculture-related laws have gathered momentum.

The controversy pertains to:
1. ‘Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020’
2. Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020’

What’s the issue?
A set of three laws passed in September aims to deregulate India’s enormous agriculture sector.
- The government says these laws will “liberate” farmers from the tyranny of middlemen.
- But many farmers fear that they stand to lose more than they could gain from the new regulations and that the main beneficiaries will be agricultural corporations with gargantuan financial firepower.

So what do India’s new farm laws do?
1. They make it easier for farmers to bypass government-regulated markets (known locally as mandis) and sell produce directly to private buyers.
2. They can now enter into contracts with private companies, a practice known in India as contract farming, and sell across state borders.
3. The new regulations also allow traders to stockpile food. This is a shift away from prohibitions against hoarding, which could make it easier for traders to take advantage of rising prices, such as during a pandemic. Such practices were criminal offences under the old rules.

Concerns of farmers:
More than 86 percent of India’s cultivated farmland is controlled by smallholder farmers who own less than two hectares (five acres) of land each.
- The new rules remove many of their safeguards. Small farmers fear that they just do not have enough bargaining power to get the kinds of prices they need for a decent standard of living when they negotiate to sell their produce to larger companies.
- The new laws also do not make written contracts mandatory. So in the case of any violation of their terms, it can be very hard for a farmer to prove that he or she has been aggrieved, giving them little recourse.
- The new rules do not guarantee any minimum price for any product, and farmers worry that the existing MSP will be abolished at some point.

How the government should deal with protesting farmers?
There is a gross communication failure on the part of the central government to explain to farmers what these laws are, and how they are intended to benefit them.
1. The apprehension about MSP and procurement going away comes from Acts being linked to some previous policy documents like the Shanta Kumar Committee report and the CACP reports suggesting reduced procurement and an end to open-ended procurement from states like Punjab to cut down costs of FCI.
2. It is feared that FCI itself may start procuring directly from the new trade area to cut down buying costs like market fees and arhtiya commission.
3. It is more about the changes in the “social contract” between the state’s farmers and the Union government that is the root cause of this apprehension.

The government should address these concerns first.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. What are APMCs? How they are regulated?
2. Overview of Model Contract farming act.
4. Stock limit regulation under the Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020 will not be applicable for?

Mains Link:
Do you think the reforms proposed for agricultural sector under the realm of Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan ensure better price realization for farmers? Elucidate.
2. How did China go about reforming its agriculture and reducing poverty?

**Context:**
Learning from agricultural reforms in China.

**Differences in approach between India and China:**
Despite similar trends in the growth rates, the two countries- India and China- have taken different reform paths;

1. China started off with reforms in the agriculture sector and in rural areas, while India started by liberalising and reforming the manufacturing sector.
2. These differences have led to different growth rates and, more importantly, different rates of poverty reduction

**Chinese Reforms:**
1. By making agriculture the starting point of market-oriented reforms, a sector which gave majority of the people their livelihood, China could ensure widespread distribution of gains and build consensus and political support for the continuation of reforms.
2. Reform of incentives resulted in greater returns to the farmers and in more efficient resource allocation, which in turn strengthened the domestic production base and made it more competitive.
3. Besides, prosperity in agriculture favoured the development of a dynamic rural non-farm (RNF) sector, regarded as one of the main causes for rapid poverty reduction in China as it provided additional sources of income outside farming.

3. Telangana withdraws regulated farming:

**Context:**
The Telangana government has withdrawn regulated farming, introduced in the last agricultural season to discourage maize and promote fine variety of paddy, pulses and oilseeds for reasons of demand in the market.

- The government has also decided not to purchase produce on its own from farmers in their villages. Now, the farmers can sell their produce wherever they fetched a good price.

**Rationale behind the move:**
It was not possible for the government to purchase or sell farmers’ produce as it was not into merchandise.

**All you need to know about Telangana’s regulated farming policy:**
The move was aimed at making agriculture a more profitable venture through scientific cultivation based on market demands.

- Under the policy, the government would guide farmers on what crops should be cultivated in which area and to what extent.
- The State government would extend Rythu Bandhu benefits and ensure MSP only to farmers who follow the directions of the State government.

**What is the Rythu Bandhu?**
Rythu Bandhu scheme also Farmer’s Investment Support Scheme (FISS) is a welfare program to support farmer’s investment for two crops a year by the Government of Telangana.

- The scheme is meant to incentivise the state’s farmers for their day to day work.
- Under the scheme, almost 58.33 lakh farmers of Telangana state are provided Rs 4000 per acre, per season (crop-sowing) - to support the farm investment twice a year (total Rs 8,000), for both - the Rabi and the Kharif seasons.
- The purpose behind the scheme was to break the vicious cycle of rural indebtedness.

**Who qualifies under the Rythu Bandhu scheme?**
1. To apply under the scheme and to make the cut, the farmer should have been a resident of Telangana state and must own farming land.
2. The scheme is applicable for small and marginal farmers; however, commercial farmers are excluded from the scheme.

3. Also, farmers who till rented land are excluded from under this scheme. Currently, more than 8 lakh farmers in Telangana enjoy the benefits of the Rythu Bandhu scheme.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G9K843NNN.1&imageview=0.

**Topics:** Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices; Public Distribution System- objectives, functioning, limitations, revamping; issues of buffer stocks and food security; Technology missions; economics of animal-rearing.

1. **How the 1.5-times formula for crops MSP is calculated?**

**Context:**
The major demand of the protesting farmers has been that the government guarantee in writing the MSP system, which assures them of a fixed price for their crops, **1.5 times of the cost of production.**

**What is MSP?**
The MSP (minimum support price) assures the farmers of a fixed price for their crops.

**How was the MSP fixed earlier?**
The Commission for Agricultural Costs & Prices (CACP) in the Ministry of Agriculture would recommend MSPs for 23 crops.

- The CACP considered various factors while recommending the MSP for a commodity, including cost of cultivation.
- It also took into account the supply and demand situation for the commodity; market price trends (domestic and global) and parity vis-à-vis other crops; and implications for consumers (inflation), environment (soil and water use) and terms of trade between agriculture and non-agriculture sectors.

**What changed with the Union Budget for 2018-19?**
The Budget for 2018-19 announced that MSPs would henceforth be fixed at **1½ times of the production costs for crops as a “predetermined principle”**.

- Simply put, the CACP's job now was only to estimate production costs for a season and recommend the MSPs by applying the 1.5-times formula.

**Which production costs were taken in fixing the MSPs?**
The CACP’s ‘Price Policy for Kharif Crops: The Marketing Season 2018-19’ report stated that its MSP recommendation was based on **1.5 times the A2+FL costs.**

- ‘A2’ covers all paid-out costs directly incurred by the farmer in cash and kind on seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, hired labour, leased-in land, fuel, irrigation, etc.
- ‘A2+FL’ includes A2 plus an imputed value of unpaid family labour.

It does not take into account **C2 costs.** ‘C2’ is a more comprehensive cost that factors in rentals and interest forgone on owned land and fixed capital assets, on top of A2+FL.

**InstaLinks:**

- Prelims Link: Composition of CCEA. What is CACP? How many crops are covered under MSP scheme?

4. Who announces MSP?
5. Difference between Kharif and Rabi crops.

**Link:** https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-how-the-1-5-times-formula-for-crops-msp-is-calculated-7075865/.

2. **Understanding the concept of trade areas in farm laws:**

**Context:**
The idea of alternate markets, or “trade areas” has been described in the Farmer’s Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020.
These are not new to India. The first and perhaps the most advanced experiments of these were in Maharashtra in 2005-06.

The government had then sanctioned the setting of private markets and collection centers through the issuance of Direct Marketing License (DMLs).

What were they?
The private markets were wholesale mandis set up by private entrepreneurs, while the collection centres were for aggregators like BigBasket and Reliance Fresh who procured directly from farmers at the farm gate.

What were the reforms in Maharashtra and why were they brought in the state?
Private markets were for the facilitation of trade in agri-commodities.

- The state government’s director of marketing issues licenses for setting up these markets.
- Minimum of five acres of land would be required for setting up of these markets along with infrastructure like auction halls, sheds, waiting halls, motorable roads, etc.
- Barring the land cost, the initial investment towards such markets is around Rs 4-5 crore.

Later on, a more intense intervention was the introduction of direct market licenses (DMLs) which allowed aggregators like Big Basket, Reliance Fresh, ADM Agro Industries to buy directly from the farmers.

Is MSP mandatory for these markets?
- One of the license clauses is that not a single trade would be carried out below the government notified MSP by these license holders.
- In the case of complaints, the licenses can be revoked. Many DML holders suspend their procurement when market prices fall below the government declared MSP. This is mainly to avoid action from the authority.

How have the reforms played out on the ground?
- Since they were introduced, estimates say around 22 per cent of the total business of mandis have been diverted towards these ‘trade area’.
- APMCs continue to report annual turnover of over Rs 48,000 crore while these markets on the other hand report business of around Rs 11,000-13,000 crore.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Composition of CCEA.
2. What is CACP?
3. How many crops are covered under MSP scheme?
4. Who announces MSP?
5. Difference between Kharif and Rabi crops.

Link: [https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/understanding-the-concept-of-trade-areas-in-the-farm-bills-7092838/](https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/understanding-the-concept-of-trade-areas-in-the-farm-bills-7092838/)

3. In farm laws, the dispute settlement provision govt has offered to roll back:

Context:
In its bid to placate farmers protesting on the borders of the national capital for over three weeks against the new farm laws, the Centre offered to significantly water down key provisions of these laws.

- Among the changes proposed is the rollback of a unique dispute resolution mechanism for issues between farmers and buyers, and instead bringing such disputes under the jurisdiction of a civil court.

What is the dispute settlement mechanism?
The Farmers’ Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020, provides a buyer a right to engage in trade and commerce of a farmer’s produce across the country.
This means a farmer has freedom to engage in intra-state and inter-state trade with buyers, expanding her choices beyond a traditional market.

- The law also provides for a dispute resolution mechanism. Section 8 of the Act, which lays down the “dispute resolution mechanism for farmers” states that “in case of any dispute arising out of a
transaction between the farmer and a trader”, a Conciliation Board appointed by the Sub- Divisional Magistrate will settle the dispute.

- It says the settlement by the Conciliation Board will be binding on the parties.

What if the parties cannot reach a settlement?

If the dispute is not settled within 30 days of being brought to the Board, the SDM will hear the dispute acting as the “Sub-Divisional Authority” for settlement of such dispute.

1. The Sub-Divisional Authority is empowered to pass three kinds of orders under the law:
   a. Pass an order for the recovery of the amount payable to the farmers and traders.
   b. Impose a penalty.
   c. Suspend for such period as he deems fit or cancel the right to operate as an electronic trading and transaction platform.

Why are farmers upset with this dispute resolution framework?

Section 15 of the Act says “no civil court shall have jurisdiction to entertain any suit or proceedings in respect of any matter, the cognisance of which can be taken and disposed of by any authority empowered by or under this Act or the rules made thereunder.”

- It is essentially the replacing of the jurisdiction of civil courts with a heavily bureaucratic procedure under the authority of the SDM.

Can a statute bar courts from having jurisdiction?

Jurisdiction of civil courts is governed by Section 9 of the Civil Procedure Code. The provision says that civil courts have the jurisdiction to try all suits of a civil nature, except suits of which cognisance is either expressly or impliedly barred.

So statutes routinely bar the jurisdiction of civil courts to set up alternative dispute mechanisms.

Topics: Land reforms in India.

1. Amendment to Karnataka Land Reforms Act:

Context:
The opposition has called amendments to the Karnataka Land Reforms Act 1961 a “death warrant” for farmers.

What are the latest amendments?
The Karnataka Land Reforms (Amendment) Bill, 2020 has repealed three key sections of the Karnataka Land Reforms Act of 1961 which imposed certain restrictions on ownership of farmland.

1. The amendments have done away with Section 79A of the Act that allowed only those earning less than Rs 25 lakh per annum to buy agricultural land.
2. Section 79B that said only people earning a living through agriculture could buy agricultural land.
3. The amendment has also removed Section 79C of the Act, which allowed revenue departments to investigate alleged violations of Sections 79A and 79B during land purchases.

Rationale behind amendment:

1. Sections proposed to be repealed from the Act were only facilitating corruption in the offices of land registrars and tahsildar rather than benefiting farmers who wanted to sell their land.
2. Irrigated agricultural land, and land owned by SC/ST communities, will remain protected as farmland despite the amendments.

What are the objections?

Concern now is that this amendment will result in the loss of agricultural land that could have been cultivated to meet food requirements and it is intended to benefit the real estate mafia in Bengaluru.
**Topics: Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.**

1. Supply of life-saving medicines affected by ‘Make in India’ policy:

   **Context:**
   The Ministry of Railways has written to the Department for Promotion of Industry & Internal Trade (DPIIT) seeking **exemption for procuring certain medical items manufactured outside India**, particularly medicines used in the treatment of COVID-19 and cancer.

   **What's the issue?**
   In the existing ‘Make in India’ policy, there is no window available to procure such items from the suppliers who may not meet the **Local Content Criteria required for Class-I and Class-II Local Supplier category**.
   1. Class-I is a local supplier or service provider whose goods, services or works offered for procurement have local content equal to or more than 50%.
   2. Class-II is a supplier or service provider whose goods, services or works offered for procurement have local content of more than 20% but less than 50%.

   Only these two categories of suppliers shall be eligible to bid in the procurement of all goods, services or works and with estimated value of purchases of less than ₹200 crore.

   **How is this affecting?**
   Certain drugs used in cancer treatment were manufactured outside India but available in the Indian market through agents or dealers. Without meeting the prescribed requirements, items cannot be procured from such agents.

   **Conclusion:**
   The uninterrupted supply chain of these medicines and medical items are essential in the human life saving category and providing satisfactory health care to all railway employees and their family members.

   **About ‘Make in India’ Policy:**
   On September 25, 2014, the Indian government announced the ‘Make in India’ initiative to encourage manufacturing in India and galvanize the economy with dedicated investments in manufacturing and services.

   **Targets:**
   1. To increase the manufacturing sector’s growth rate to 12-14% per annum in order to increase the sector’s share in the economy.
   2. To create 100 million additional manufacturing jobs in the economy by 2022.
   3. To ensure that the manufacturing sector’s contribution to GDP is increased to 25% by 2022 (revised to 2025) from the current 15-16%.

   **Outcomes so far:**
   1. **Foreign direct investment (FDI) has increased** from $16 billion in 2013-14 to $36 billion in 2015-16 **but it has not increased further and is not contributing to Indian industrialisation**.
   2. **FDIs in the manufacturing sector are becoming weaker than before.** It has come down to $7 billion in 2017-18 as compared to $9.6 billion in 2014-15.
   3. **FDIs in the service sector is $23.5 billion,** more than three times that of the manufacturing sector which shows Indian economy’s traditional strong points of having remarkably developed computer services.
   4. India’s share in the global exports of manufactured products remains around 2% which is far less than 18% share of China.

   **InstaLinks:**
   **Prelims Link:**
   1. MII initiative.
   2. Targets.
   3. Share of the Service sector in GDP.
   4. Local requirement criteria under the policy.

   **Mains Link:**
   Discuss the performance of MII initiative.
   Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GE08212FM.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GE08212FM.1&imageview=0).
2. Cairn Energy wins arbitration award against India in tax dispute:
What was the case?
Cairn had challenged the Indian government seeking taxes over an internal business reorganisation using the 2012 retrospective tax law, under the UK-India Bilateral Investment Treaty.
- In 2011, Cairn Energy sold its majority stake in Cairn India to Vedanta Ltd, reducing its stake in the Indian company to about 10 per cent.
- In 2014, the Indian tax department had demanded Rs 10,247 crore ($1.4 billion) in taxes.

What is the latest ruling?
The three-member tribunal also comprised a judge appointed by the Indian government. It ruled:
1. India’s claim of Rs 10,247 crore in past taxes over a 2006-07 internal reorganisation of Cairn's India business was not a valid demand.
2. India should pay the funds withheld along with the interest to the Scottish oil explorer for seizing dividend, tax refund, and sale of shares to partly recover the dues.
3. India had breached its obligations to Cairn under the UK-India Bilateral Investment Treaty.

How the issue reached arbitration tribunal?
- Cairn's claim was brought under the terms of the UK-India Bilateral Investment Treaty, the legal seat of the tribunal was the Netherlands, and the proceedings were under the registry of the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

Implications:
This is a second blow to the government in three months on the controversial retrospective tax levy.
- The development comes as a major setback for the Indian government after Vodafone Group Plc had won an international arbitration case against the Indian government in September.

What next for the Indian Government?
The order does not contain a provision for challenge or appeal against the award, but the Indian government may challenge it, and the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) will take a final call on challenging the award.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. What is Arbitration?
2. Recent Amendments.
3. About the International Court of Arbitration.
4. About the Arbitration Council of India.
5. Appointment of arbitrators under the 1996 Act.
6. PCA - composition, functions and members.

Mains Link:
Discuss the significance of the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Act.

3. India challenges Vodafone arbitration ruling in Singapore:
Context:
India has challenged the Permanent Court of Arbitration’s verdict in favour of British telecom giant Vodafone Group in a case involving a Rs 20,000 crore demand from the Indian income tax authorities, in Singapore.

PCA at The Hague had ruled that:
1. India’s retrospective demand of Rs 22,100 crore as capital gains and withholding tax imposed on Vodafone for a 2007 deal was “in breach of the guarantee of fair and equitable treatment”.

2. India should not to pursue the tax demand any more against Vodafone Group.

What happened after India passed the retrospective taxation law?

- The Act was passed by Parliament in 2012 and the onus to pay the taxes fell back on Vodafone.

**Article 9 of the BIT** says that any dispute between “an investor of one contracting party and the other contracting party in connection with an investment in the territory of the other contracting party” shall as far as possible be settled amicably through negotiations.

What is the Bilateral Investment Treaty?
The BIT was signed for promotion and protection of investment by companies of each country in the other’s jurisdiction.

- The two countries would, under the BIT, ensure that companies present in each other’s jurisdictions would be “at all times be accorded fair and equitable treatment and shall enjoy full protection and security in the territory of the other”.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. PCA- composition, functions and members.
2. Are PCA rulings binding on parties.

**Topics: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.**

1. What is India’s sprawling renewable energy park, coming up on its border with Pakistan?

**Context:**
On December 15, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone for the 30,000 MW project in Gujarat’s Kutch district, billed as the largest of its kind in the world.

The renewable energy park will have two zones:
1. A 49,600-hectare hybrid park zone that will accommodate wind and solar power plants of 24,800 MW capacities.
2. An exclusive wind park zone spread over 23,000 hectares.
Strategic location:
- The project site is about 25 km from Khavda, which is the last point that can be accessed by civilians in the area.
- The exclusive wind park zone will come up within 1-6 km of the international border.
- The hybrid park zone will be located 6 km from the Indo-Pak border.
This site has been chosen because this is a complete wasteland and windmills put near the border also act as a boundary.

Who will set up the wind and solar projects in this park?
- Allotted to Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) to set up wind projects under the competitive bidding route policy.
- Power Grid Corporation of India will evacuate the power produced at this park.

Renewable energy capacity of India:
- RENEWABLE ENERGY HAS A SHARE OF 23.39% IN THE TOTAL INSTALLED GENERATION CAPACITY IN THE COUNTRY i.e. 368.98 GW (Upto 29th February, 2020).
- India now at 5TH GLOBAL POSITION for overall installed renewable energy capacity.
- RENEWABLE ENERGY INSTALLED CAPACITY INCREASED 226% IN LAST 5 YEARS.

Link: https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/gujarat-kutch-hybrid-renewable-energy-park-7092444/.

2. Petroleum board’s new unified tariff structure – its impact and challenges in implementation:

Context:
The Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) has notified a new tariff structure for 14 natural gas pipelines.

What is the change?
Under the new unified tariff structure, buyers will be charged a fixed tariff for the transport of gas within 300 kms of a source and a fixed tariff for the transport of gas beyond 300 kms on a single pipeline network.
- This, PNGRB says, would be significantly cheaper for buyers further away from the source of gas that were earlier charged on the basis of the number of pipelines used and the distance from the source of gas.
- Therefore, a buyer using multiple pipelines in GAIL’s networks would likely benefit significantly from this change.

How does this impact gas transmission companies?
- The changes in the tariffs will likely incentivise greater investment into gas transmission infrastructure as natural gas becomes more affordable for users further away from the west coast of the country.
- Gas transport tariffs are set to provide a “reasonable rate of return” on normative levels of capital employed and operating costs for pipelines, according to the PNGRB.

Who loses out?
A number of companies which use natural gas as an input have set up fertilizer units and power plants close to LNG terminals on the west coast. The cost of gas for them may rise noticeably.
- The move was similar to the now defunct “freight equalisation” policy introduced by the government in 1952 under which the government subsidised the transportation cost of minerals to areas further away from the sources of minerals.

Challenges ahead:
1. The new regulations will lead to a significant hike in the cost of gas transportation for many consumers who may already have agreements in place for the transport of gas at lower prices based on the existing regime.
2. A further challenge to the regulation could come from the potential violation of the bidding process for bid-out pipeline through the change in regulations.

3. Another potential avenue for a legal challenge could be the absence of a member (legal) on the board of the PNGRB at the time the regulation has been notified.

**Index**

- About PNGRB.
- Overview of the new tariff structure for natural gas pipelines.
- What is natural gas?
- Applications.

### InstaLinks:

#### Prelims Link:
1. About PNGRB.
2. Overview of the new tariff structure for natural gas pipelines.
3. What is natural gas?
4. Applications.

#### Mains Link:

Discuss the potential of natural gas reserves in India.

**3. Technical Specifications of Floating Structures:**

**Context:**

Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways issues draft guidelines of Technical Specifications of Floating Structures for public consultation.

- The Ministry intends to promote floating jetties for various usages all along the Indian Coastline.

**The benefits of floating jetties over the conventional quay and fixed concrete structures are as follows:**

1. It is a cost-effective solution and much cheaper than conventional structures price.
2. Setting up of floating structures is much faster as compared to conventional jetties. Usually, floating structures can be built in 6-8 months as compared to 24 months for conventional structures.
3. Its environmental impact is minimal.
4. Expansions are easily feasible due to modular construction techniques.
5. It is easily transportable in case of reconfiguring of the port.
6. It provides constant freeboard between jetties and boats.

**Background:**

Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has successfully implemented a few pilot projects in the recent past by following the international guiding principles.

- These include setting up of passenger floating jetties in Goa, water-aerodromes at Sabarmati River & at Sardar Sarovar Dam (for the seaplane services).

**4. New Parliament building:**

**Context:**

Foundation stone of the new Parliament building.
This took place nearly a hundred years after the foundation for the existing Parliament was laid by Duke of Connaught on February 12, 1921.

Key Points:
1. It is expected that the structure would be completed by 2022, coinciding with 75 years of India's independence.
2. The theme of the new building would celebrate the cultural diversity of the country.
3. It would also incorporate regional arts and crafts. Artisans and sculptures from across the country would be employed to complete the new structure making it a symbol of Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India).
4. In September this year, Tata Projects Limited won the bid to construct the new parliament building at cost of Rs 861.90 crore.
5. The new building will be constructed close to the existing one under the Central Vista redevelopment project.

What is Central Vista project that Supreme Court has halted?
- It is a grand redevelopment project for building what will be the power corridor of India, having a new Parliament building, a common central secretariat and revamped three-km-long Rajpath, from the Rashtrapati Bhavan to the India Gate.
- The Supreme Court warned the government not to carry out any work on the Central Vista project until it decides on a bunch of 10 petitions challenging the mega redevelopment plan.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GE5828M7E.1&imageview=0

5. National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF):
Context:
Canada’s PSP, US’ DFC, Axis Bank invest $107 million in NIIF’s master fund.
- After the new commitment from the three investors, the overall size of the 'master fund' has touched USD 2.34 billion.

About NIIF:
The government had set up the ₹40,000 crore NIIF in 2015 as an investment vehicle for funding commercially viable greenfield, brownfield and stalled infrastructure projects.
- NIIF’s mandate includes investing in areas such as energy, transportation, housing, water, waste management and other infrastructure-related sectors in India.
- NIIF currently manages three funds each with its distinctive investment mandate. The funds are registered as Alternative Investment Fund (AIF) with the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).

NIIF Investors:
- The NIIF signed the first investment deal of worth USD 1 billion with the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA) in October 2017. The ADIA became the first-ever international investor in the NIIF’s master fund.
● The Indian Government holds a 49% share in the NIIF. Domestic investors such as ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, Kotak Mahindra Life are the other notable investors in the NIIF.
● The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank in June 2018 announced to invest USD 200 million.

The three funds are:
1. **Master Fund**: Is an infrastructure fund with the objective of primarily investing in operating assets in the core infrastructure sectors such as roads, ports, airports, power etc.
2. **Fund of Funds**: Managed by fund managers who have good track records in infrastructure and associated sectors in India. Some of the sectors of focus include Green Infrastructure, Mid-Income & Affordable Housing, Infrastructure services and allied sectors.
3. **Strategic Investment Fund**: Is registered as an Alternative Investment Fund II under SEBI in India. The objective is to invest largely in equity and equity-linked instruments. It will focus on green field and brown field investments in the core infrastructure sectors.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. About NIIF.
2. Different funds under NIIF.
3. Who manages NIIF.
4. Investors.

**Mains Link:**
5. What are alternative investment funds?

6. Centre to set up development finance entity:

**Context:**
The government plans to set up a Development Finance Institution (DFI) in the next three to four months.

- In her last Budget speech, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had proposed to set up DFIs for promoting infrastructure funding.

**Need for:**
- To mobilise the ₹111 lakh crore required for funding of the ambitious national infrastructure pipeline.
- To enhance credit rating of projects. It would fund projects where others are not willing to enter because of the risks involved.

**DFIs in India- Historical background:**
DFI would have a key developmental role apart from the financing role.
- **Prior to liberalisation**, India had DFIs engaged in development of industry.
- ICICI and IDBI, in their previous avatars, were DFIs.
- The country’s oldest financial institution IFCI Ltd. too had acted as a DFI.

**About national infrastructure pipeline:**
In the budget speech of 2019-2020, Finance Minister announced an outlay of Rs 100 lakh Crore for infrastructure projects over the next 5 years.
- NIP is a first-of-its-kind initiative to provide world-class infrastructure across the country and improve the quality of life for all citizens.
- It will improve project preparation, attract investments (both domestic & foreign) into infrastructure, and will be crucial for attaining the target of becoming a $5 trillion economy by FY 2025.
- Covers both economic and social infrastructure projects.

**Measures needed:**
1. **Investment needed**: ₹111 lakh crore over the next five years (2020-2025) to build infrastructure projects and drive economic growth.
2. **Energy, roads, railways and urban projects** are estimated to account for the bulk of projects (around 70%).
3. The centre (39 percent) and state (40 percent) are expected to have an almost equal share in implementing the projects, while the private sector has 21 percent share.
4. Aggressive push towards asset sales.
5. Monetisation of infrastructure assets.
6. Strengthening the municipal bond market.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. What is NIP? When was it launched?
2. Projects covered under NIP.
3. Key recommendations made by task force headed by Atanu Chakraborty on NIP.
4. Three committees proposed to be set up as per the recommendations made by Task Force.

5. What is India Investment Grid?

**Mains Link:**
Discuss the significance and features of NIP.


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7. Electricity (Rights of Consumers) Rules, 2020:

**Context:**
Notified recently.
- These rules serve to “empower” consumers with rights that would allow them to access continuous supply of quality, reliable electricity.

The following areas are covered under the rules:
1. Rights of consumers and Obligations of Distribution licensees;
2. release of new connection and modification in existing connection;
3. metering arrangement;
4. billing and payment;
5. disconnection and reconnection;
6. reliability of supply;
7. consumer as ‘prosumer’;
8. standards of performance of licensee;
9. compensation mechanism;
10. call centre for consumer services;
11. grievance redressal mechanism.

**Key Provisions:**
1. States will have to implement these rules and discoms will be held more accountable for issues like delays in providing and renewing connections of electricity.
2. They are also obligated to provide round-the-clock electricity to consumers, as per the Ministry of Power.
3. To ensure compliance, the government will apply penalties that will be credited to the consumer’s account.
4. There are certain exceptions to these rules, especially where use for agricultural purposes is concerned.

**Background:**
Electricity is a Concurrent List (Seventh Schedule) subject and the central government has the authority and the power to make laws on it.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. Electricity under 7th schedule.
2. Subjects under seventh Schedule.
3. What happens when a State's law is in conflict with Centre's law.

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8. Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor:

**Context:**
PM to inaugurate the New Bhaupur- New Khurja section and the Operation Control Centre of Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor.

**About the eastern corridor:**
Length: 1856 km.
Consists of two distinct segments: an electrified double-track segment & an electrified single-track segment.
Starts from Sahnewal near Ludhiana (Punjab) and will pass through the states of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Jharkhand to terminate at Dankuni in West Bengal. Constructed by Dedicated Freight Corridor Corporation of India Limited (DFCCIL), that has been set up as a special purpose vehicle to build and operate Dedicated Freight Corridors.

Significance:
Eastern Corridor is projected to cater to a number of traffic streams-coal for the power plants in the northern region of U.P., Delhi, Haryana, Punjab and parts of Rajasthan from the Eastern coal fields, finished steel, food grains, cement, fertilizers, lime stone from Rajasthan to steel plants in the east and general goods.

Why do we need DFCs?
Increased burden: Covering a total of 10,122 km, these corridors carry the heaviest traffic and are highly congested. The route carries 52% of passenger traffic and 58% of freight traffic, according to the Make-in-India report of 2017. Also, these routes are highly saturated, with line capacity utilisation reaching as high as 150%.

Rise in demand: Considering increased transport demands, overtly congested routes and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with road transport, these freight corridors will help reduce the cost and allow faster transportation.

Revenue generation: They will open new avenues for investment, as this will lead to the construction of industrial corridors and logistic parks along these routes.

InstaLinks: 3. About DFCCIL.

Prelims Link:
1. About DFCs.
2. Eastern and western links: Length, extent and states covered.

Mains Link: Discuss the need for DFCs.


Context:
National Common Mobility Card expanded to the Airport Express Line of Delhi Metro, which was started in Ahmedabad last year.

Key features:
- Dubbed as ‘One Nation One Card’, the inter-operable transport card would allow the holders to pay for their bus travel, toll taxes, parking charges, retail shopping and even withdraw money.
- The idea was floated by the Nandan Nilekani committee set up by the Reserve Bank of India.

How it works?
NCMC is an automatic fare collection system. It will turn smartphones into an inter-operable transport card that commuters can use eventually to pay for Metro, bus and suburban railways services.
- This card runs on RuPay card.
- The stored value on card supports offline transaction across all travel needs with minimal financial risk to involved stakeholders.
- Ministry of housing & urban affairs brought to the fore the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC) to enable seamless travel by different metros and other transport systems across the country besides retail shopping and purchases.

Need for and significance of NCMC:
Public transport is extensively used across India as the economical and convenient mode of commuting for all classes of society. **Cash continues to be the most preferred mode of fare payments across the public transport.**

- However, there are multiple challenges associated with the cash payment such as cash handling, revenue leakages, cash reconciliation etc.
- Various initiatives have been taken by transit operators to automate and digitize the fare collection using Automatic Fare Collection System (AFC).
- The introduction of closed loop cards issued by these operators helped to digitize the fare collection to a significant extent. However, the restricted usability of these payment instruments limits the digital adoption by customers.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**

1. What is NCMC?
2. Recommended by?
3. What is RuPay platform?

**Mains Link:**

4. Services included under NCMC.

**Topics:** Science and Technology - developments and their applications and effects in everyday life Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

**1. Quantum key distribution (QKD):**

**Context:**

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully demonstrated communication between its two labs using Quantum Key Distribution technology.

- The Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL) and The Research Centre Imarat (RCI) were the two labs that participated in this demonstration.

**What you need to know about this technology?**

**Typical encryption** relies on traditional mathematics and while for now it is more or less adequate and safe from hacking, the development of quantum computing threatens that.

- **Quantum computing** refers to a new era of faster and more powerful computers, and the theory goes that they would be able to break current levels of encryption.
- QKD works by using photons — the particles which transmit light — to transfer data.
- QKD allows two distant users, who do not share a long secret key initially, to produce a common, random string of secret bits, called a **secret key**.
- Using the one-time pad encryption this key is proven to be secure to encrypt and decrypt a message, which can then be transmitted over a standard communication channel.

**Significance of this technology:**

- The encryption is “unbreakable” and that’s mainly because of the way data is carried via the photon. A photon cannot be perfectly copied and any attempt to measure it will disturb it. This means that a person trying to intercept the data will leave a trace.
- The implications could be huge for cybersecurity, making businesses safer, but also making it more difficult for governments to hack into communication.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**

1. What are qubits?
2. What is Quantum technology?
3. What are photons?

**Mains Link:**

4. What is QSD?

**Discuss why QSD is seen as superior technology when compared to others.**
2. Plant based protein innovation: IIT-Delhi’s ‘mock eggs’:

Context:
The innovation of plant-based mock egg by Prof Kavya Dashora, IIT Delhi has secured first prize at Innovate4SDG contest by ‘UNDP (United Nation Development Program) Accelerator Lab India’.
- The award includes a sum of $5000.

Significance:
- The development of the mock egg meets the protein needs of the diet-specific, health conscious, vegan and vegetarian people, claims IIT-Delhi.
- This innovation addresses SDG 2 and 3 (zero hunger and good health and well-being).

What is the Mock Egg?
The mock egg has been developed from very simple farm-based crop proteins, which not only looks and tastes like egg but also very close in nutritional profile to a poultry egg.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. What is the Mock Egg?
2. Components.
3. About lab grown meat.

Mains Link:
Discuss the significance of plant grown meats.

3. National Mathematics Day:

Context:
Celebrated every year on December 22.
- It is observed to honor the birth anniversary of the famous mathematician Srinivasa Ramanujan who greatly contributed towards mathematical analysis, number theory, infinite series and continued fractions.

Highlights of Srinivasa Ramanujan’s life:
- In 1911, Ramanujan published the first of his papers in the Journal of the Indian Mathematical Society.
- Ramanujan traveled to England in 1914, where Hardy tutored him and collaborated with him in some research.
- He worked out the Riemann series, the elliptic integrals, hypergeometric series, the functional equations of the zeta function, and his own theory of divergent series.
- The number 1729 is known as the Hardy-Ramanujan number after a famous visit by Hardy to see Ramanujan at a hospital.
- Hardy observed Ramanujan’s work primarily involved fields less known even amongst other pure mathematicians.
- Ramanujan’s home state of Tamil Nadu celebrates 22 December as ‘State IT Day’, memorialising both the man and his achievements, as a native of Tamil Nadu.

The Dev Patel-starrer ‘The Man Who Knew Infinity’ (2015) was a biopic on the mathematician.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link and Mains Link:
- Key achievements and contributions of Sri Ramanujan.

4. ‘TiHAN-IIT Hyderabad’:

Context:
www.insightsonindia.com 103 InsightsIAS
● Inaugurated recently.
● It is India’s first Test bed for Autonomous Navigation Systems (Terrestrial and Aerial).
● Special Features of this Facility include Test Tracks, Emulation of Real-World Scenarios, State of the Art Simulation Technologies, Road Infrastructure, V2X Communication, Drone Runways and Landing Area and many more.

Background:
The Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India, has sanctioned Rs. 135 crores to IIT Hyderabad under the National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber-Physical Systems (NM-ICPS) to set up a Technology Innovation Hub on Autonomous Navigation and Data Acquisition Systems (UAVs, RoVs, etc.).

What are Cyber Physical Systems (CPS)?
They are a new class of engineered systems that integrate computation and physical processes in a dynamic environment. CPS encompasses technology areas of Cybernetics, Mechatronics, Design and Embedded systems, Internet of Things (IoT), Big Data, Artificial Intelligence (AI) among others.

● To harness the potential of this new wave of technology and make India a leading player in CPS, the Union Cabinet approved NM-ICPS in 2018.
● It had a total outlay of INR 3,660 crores for a period of five years.

The mission implementation would develop and bring:
1. Cyber Physical Systems (CPS) and associated technologies within reach in the country,
2. adoption of CPS technologies to address India specific National / Regional issues,
3. produce Next Generation skilled manpower in CPS,
4. catalyze Translational Research,
5. accelerate entrepreneurship and start-up ecosystem development in CPS,
6. give impetus to advanced research in CPS, Technology development and higher education in Science, Technology and Engineering disciplines, and
7. place India at par with other advanced countries and derive several direct and indirect benefits.

Implementation:
● The Mission aims at establishment of 15 numbers of Technology Innovation Hubs (TIH), six numbers of Application Innovation Hubs (AIH) and four numbers of Technology Translation Research Parks (TTRP).
● These Hubs & TTRPs will connect to Academics, Industry, Central Ministries and State Government in developing solutions at reputed academic, R&D and other organizations across the country in a hub and spoke model.

InstaLinks:
4. Potential applications of CPS.

Prelims Link:
1. What are Cyber-Physical Systems?
2. What is IoT?
3. What is Big Data?

Mains Link:
Write a note on Cyber-Physical Systems and its associated technologies.

Topics: Awareness in space.

1. Chang’e-5 probe:

Context:
Chinese spacecraft carrying rocks and soil from the moon has begun its journey back to Earth, putting China on course to become the first country to successfully retrieve lunar samples since the 1970s.

What Next?
A successful landing in Inner Mongolia would make China only the third country to have retrieved lunar samples after the United States and the Soviet Union.
The plan was to collect 2 kg (4.4 lbs) of samples, although it has not been disclosed how much was actually gathered.
Background:
The Chang'e-5 was launched on Nov. 24 and a lander vehicle touched down on the moon on Dec. 1. The mission was expected to take around 23 days in total. The objective of the mission was to bring back lunar rocks, the first attempt by any nation to retrieve samples from the moon in four decades.

About the Chang'e-5 probe:
- The probe is named after the mythical Chinese moon goddess.
- The rocket is comprised of four parts: an orbiter, a returner, an ascender and a lander.
- The objective of the mission is to bring back lunar rocks, the first attempt by any nation to retrieve samples from the moon in four decades.
- If successful, China will be only the third country to have retrieved samples from the moon, following the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s.
- This will help scientists learn about the moon’s origins, formation and volcanic activity on its surface.

Identified location for the collection of samples:
The Chinese probe will collect 2 kg of surface material from a previously unexplored area known as Oceanus Procellarum — or “Ocean of Storms” — which consist of a vast lava plain.

The Chang'e-5 mission is expected to realize four “firsts” in China's space history:
1. The first time for a probe to take off from the surface of the Moon.
2. The first time to automatically sample the lunar surface.
3. The first time to conduct unmanned rendezvous and docking in lunar orbit.
4. The first time to return to Earth with lunar soil samples in escape velocity.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G9L81BNFD.1&imageview=0

2. How did a rocket booster from 1966 become a Near-Earth Object?

Context:
In September, the NASA-funded Pan-STARRS1 telescope detected an unknown object which followed a curved path in the sky, indicating its proximity to the Earth. Initially, the object was thought to be an asteroid orbiting the Earth and was hence given a name by the Minor Planet Center.
- However, scientists have now concluded that the Near-Earth Object called 2020 SO is the rocket booster that helped lift the space agency's Surveyor spacecraft toward the Moon in 1966.

What was Surveyor-2?
The Surveyor-2 spacecraft was supposed to make a soft landing on the Moon's surface in September 1966, during which time one of the three thrusters failed to ignite as a result of which the spacecraft started spinning and crashed on the surface.
The aim of the mission was to reconnoiter the lunar surface ahead of the Apollo missions that led to the first lunar landing in 1969.

What happened then?
While the spacecraft crashed into the Moon's surface, the rocket booster disappeared into an unknown orbit around the Sun.

About Pan-STARRS1 telescope:
The Panoramic Survey Telescope and Rapid Response System, Pan-STARRS for short, is a system for wide-field astronomical imaging, developed and operated by the Institute of Astronomy at the University of Hawaii.

- Pan-STARRS1 (PS1) is the first part of Pan-STARRS to be completed. The PS1 survey uses a 1.8-meter telescope and its 1.4 Gigapixel camera to image the sky.


3. Geosynchronous transfer orbit (GTO):

Context: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully placed into geosynchronous transfer orbit (GTO) India’s 42nd communications satellite, CMS-01, carried on board the PSLV-C50, from the second launch pad of the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota Range.

- This was PSLV’s 52nd mission.

About CMS-01:
- It is a communications satellite envisaged for providing services in extended C Band of the frequency spectrum and its coverage will include the Indian mainland and the Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands.
- The satellite is expected to have a life of over seven years.

Different orbits:
- A Geosynchronous Orbit (GEO) takes a satellite around the Earth at a rate of once per day, keeping it roughly in the same area over the ground.
- A Geostationary Orbit (GSO) is a geosynchronous orbit with an inclination of zero, meaning, it lies on the equator.

All geostationary satellites are geosynchronous. Not all geosynchronous satellites are geostationary.

What, then, is a transfer orbit?
- Rockets sending payloads to geosynchronous and geostationary orbits drop off their payload in transfer orbits, halfway points en route to the satellite’s final position.
- From transfer orbit, a satellite conducts engine burns to circularize its orbit and change its inclination.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. What is a geostationary orbit?
2. What is a geosynchronous orbit?
3. What is a polar orbit?
4. What is a transfer orbit?

Mains Link: What are communication satellites? Discuss their significance for India.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G6T8318J1.1&imageview=0. 
Topics: Awareness in the fields of IT, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

1. Quantum Supremacy:

Context:
China Claims Quantum Supremacy With Computer 10 Billion Times Faster Than Google's Prototype.
- Google said last year it has built a computer that could perform a computation in 200 seconds that would take the fastest supercomputers 10,000 years.

What is Quantum Supremacy?
It is a term proposed in 2012 by John Preskill, professor of theoretical physics at the California Institute of Technology.
It describes the point where quantum computers can do things that classical computers cannot.
- Superposition and entanglement are what give quantum computers the ability to process so much more information so much faster.

Differences between a standard computer and a quantum computer:
1. A classical computer performs calculations using bits that is 0 representing off and 1 representing on. It uses transistors to process information in the form of sequences of zeros and ones called computer binary language. More transistors more processing ability.
2. A quantum computer uses the laws of quantum mechanics. Here, different states can be achieved in particles due to their internal angular momentum called spin. The two states 0 and 1 can be represented in the spin of the particle. Thus, in a classical computer information is expressed through single number either 0 or 1.
A quantum computer uses qubits which is described as a 0 and 1 at the same time giving us more processing power.

Potential:
While still in its infancy, quantum computing is seen as the key to radically improving the processing speed and power of computers, enabling them to simulate large systems and drive advances in physics, chemistry and other fields.

Sources: Times of India.

2. Lab-grown meat: cleared in Singapore, emerging alternative worldwide:

Context:
The Singapore Food Agency (SFA) approved this week the sale of a lab-grown meat product.

Why is this big deal?
In its June 2020 Food Outlook Report, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) stated that the world meat output was set to contract row to 333 million tonnes, 1.7% less than in 2019.
- The disruption has been caused mainly by Covid-19, but it has added to already widespread fears about zoonotic diseases, especially African swine fever and highly pathogenic avian influenza.
This provides an opportunity to the alternative meat industry.

How is lab-grown or cultured meat different from plant-based meat?
The latter is made from plant sources such as soy or pea protein, while cultured meat is grown directly from cells in a laboratory.
- Both have the same objective: to offer alternatives to traditional meat products that could feed a lot more people, reduce the threat of zoonotic diseases, and mitigate the environmental impact of meat consumption.
In terms of cellular structure, cultured or cultivated meat is the same as conventional meat except that cultured meat does not come directly from animals.

Benefits of cultivated meat:

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1. Since cultivated meat is created in clean facilities, the risk of contamination by pathogens such as salmonella and E coli, which may be present in traditional slaughterhouses and meat-packing factories, is significantly reduced.
2. It does not require antibiotics either, unlike animals raised for meat, thereby reducing the threat posed to public health by growing antibiotic resistance.

How soon will cultured meat be widely available to consumers?
There are still significant hurdles to be overcome before cultured meat is widely available. They are:
1. Affordability.
2. Dealing with consumer mistrust.
3. Resistance from traditional meat producers.

Who else is making cultured meat?
According to the GFI report, by the end of 2019, 55 companies were focused on cultivated meat products, including:
- Future Meat Technologies (chicken, lamb, beef) in Israel,
- Biftek (beef) in Turkey,
- Cubiq Foods (chicken fat) in Spain,
- Netherlands based Meatable (pork, beef),
- French company Gourmet (foie gras) and US-based Memphis Meats (beef, chicken, duck).
- Also among these is Delhi-based Clear Meat, which is developing cultured chicken.


3. Microwave energy likely made U.S. officials ill:

Context:
A study commissioned by the US State Department has found that "directed" microwave radiation is the likely cause of illnesses among American diplomats in Cuba and China.

What's the issue?
The health effects were experienced by about two dozen Americans affiliated with the U.S. Embassy in Cuba as well as Canadian diplomats and personnel at the U.S. consulate in Guangzhou, China, in early 2017.

What does the study reveal?
The study found that "directed, pulsed radio frequency energy appears to be the most plausible" explanation for symptoms that included intense head pressure, dizziness and cognitive difficulties.

- The study, however, did not name a source for the energy and did not say it came as the result of an attack.

What are Microwaves?
Microwaves are defined as electromagnetic radiations with a frequency ranging between 300 MHz to 300 GHz while the wavelength ranges from 1 mm to around 30 cm.
- They fall between the infrared radiation and radio waves in the electromagnetic spectrum.

Properties of microwaves:
- Metal surfaces reflect microwaves.

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Microwaves of certain frequencies are absorbed by water.
Microwave transmission is affected by wave effects such as refraction, reflection, interference, and diffraction.
Microwaves can pass through glass and plastic.

What are “microwave weapons”?
“Microwave weapons” are supposed to be a type of direct energy weapons, which aim highly focused energy in the form of sonic, laser, or microwaves, at a target.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. What is the electromagnetic spectrum?
2. What are microwaves?
3. Properties.
4. Applications.
5. Effects.

Mains Link:
What are chemical weapons? Discuss how they are regulated across the world.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GI681PKAC.1&imageview=0.

4. Light Detection and Ranging Survey (LiDAR) technique:

Context:
National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited will be adopting Light Detection and Ranging Survey (LiDAR) technique using Laser enabled equipment mounted on a Helicopter for conducting ground survey for the preparation of Detailed Project Report for the proposed Delhi-Varanasi HSR corridor.

Background:
- The proposed Delhi-Varanasi HSR alignment covers mixed terrains including densely populated urban and rural areas, Highways, Roads, Ghats, Rivers, Green fields etc, which makes this activity more challenging.
- National High Speed Rail Corporation Limited (NHSRCL) has been entrusted with the work for preparing Detailed Project Report for the Delhi-Varanasi HSR Corridor by the Ministry of Railways.
- The tentative length of the corridor is about 800 km, the alignment and stations will be decided in consultation with the government.

What is LiDAR?
It is a remote sensing method that uses light in the form of a pulsed laser to measure ranges (variable distances) to the Earth.
- These light pulses—combined with other data recorded by the airborne system—generate precise, three-dimensional information about the shape of the Earth and its surface characteristics.

How it works?
LiDAR follows a simple principle — throw laser light at an object on the earth surface and calculate the time it takes to return to the LiDAR source. Given the speed at which the light travels (approximately 186,000 miles per second), the process of measuring the exact distance through LiDAR appears to be incredibly fast.
- A lidar instrument principally consists of a laser, a scanner, and a specialized GPS receiver.
- Airplanes and helicopters are the most commonly used platforms for acquiring lidar data over broad areas.
InstaFact:
- The aerial LiDAR survey technique, for the first time for any railway project in India, was adopted for the Mumbai- Ahmedabad High Speed Rail Corridor primarily because of its high accuracy.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. What is GPS?
2. Location based navigation services of various countries including India.
3. How LiDAR works?
4. Applications of LiDAR.
5. What is Laser?

Mains Link:
Discuss the significance of LiDAR technology.

5. Launch of fortified rice in PDS opposed by activists:

Context:
As the Odisha government is preparing to launch fortified rice in the Public Distribution System (PDS) in Malkangiri district from coming February, more than 100 activists have opposed the move saying the people have sufficient substitutes in natural food to meet the nutritional needs.

What do activists say?
- Vitamin C and calcium are available in abundance in natural food.
- Vitamin C is water soluble. If the rice is laced with Vitamin C, it will get washed away while the rice is cleaned before cooking.
- It is a futile exercise to add Vitamin C to uncooked rice. And the move would lead to wasteful expenditure of taxpayers’ money.

What is food fortification?
According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), food fortification is defined as the practice of deliberately increasing the content of essential micronutrients so as to improve the nutritional quality of the food supply and to provide a public health benefit with minimal risk to health.

How is it regulated in India?
- In October 2016, Food Safety and Standards Authority Of India (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) and Double Fortified Salt (with Iodine and Iron) to reduce the high burden of micronutrient malnutrition in India.
- India’s National Nutritional strategy, 2017, had listed food fortification as one of the interventions to address anaemia, vitamin A and iodine deficiencies apart from supplementation and dietary diversification.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Bio fortification vs Genetic modifications.
3. Approval for Biofortified and GM crops in India.
4. GM crops allowed in India.

Mains Link:
What do you understand by fortification of foods?
Discuss its advantages.
Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GLM81TNMU.1&imageview=0.

6. Lakshadweep to get optical fibre cable:

Context:
The Union Cabinet has approved laying of undersea optical fibre cable to connect 11 islands of Lakshadweep with Kochi by May 2023, to help improve broadband connectivity in the Union Territory.
- The project will be funded by the Universal Service Obligation Fund.
Background:
Prime Minister Narendra Modi had launched the **submarine cable connectivity to Andaman and Nicobar Islands in August.**
He had then announced the aim to connect Lakshadweep with undersea optical fibre cable as well in 1,000 days.

Significance:
This would improve telecommunication facilities in Lakshadweep by providing large bandwidth, and will play a vital role for delivery of e-governance services, potential development of fisheries, coconut-based industries, high-value tourism, educational development and healthcare.

What is Submarine Communications cable?
- It is a cable laid on the sea bed between land-based stations to carry telecommunication signals across stretches of ocean and sea.
- The optical fiber elements are typically individually coated with plastic layers and contained in a protective tube suitable for the environment where the cable will be deployed.

Importance of submarine cables:
- Currently 99 per cent of the data traffic that is crossing oceans is carried by undersea cables.
- The reliability of submarine cables is high, especially when multiple paths are available in the event of a cable break.
- The total carrying capacity of submarine cables is in the terabits per second, while satellites typically offer only 1,000 megabits per second and display higher latency.

InstaLinks:
**Prelims Link:**
1. About optical fibers.
2. Types of Submarine fiber cables.
3. About the recently launched Chennai-Andaman and Nicobar Island Submarine Cable System.
4. Key features of the Universal Service Obligation Fund.

**Mains Link:**
Write a note on Chennai-Andaman and Nicobar Island Submarine Cable System.
Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G9T824GCE.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G9T824GCE.1&imageview=0).

7. PM- WANI:

Context:
**Public Wi-Fi plan 'PM Wani' gets cabinet approval.**
- The move is aimed at helping accelerate the uptake of broadband Internet services.
- It was first recommended by the **Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) in 2017.**

Key features of the project:
1. This will allow setting up of public WiFi hotspots across the country via public data offices or public data offices (PDOs).
2. It will not require the PDOs to get a license or pay a fee.
3. This will involve multiple players, including PDOs, Public Data Office Aggregators (PDOA), app providers, and a central registry.
Implementation:
1. PDOs will be "facilitators" between service providers and users.
2. A PDOA will be an aggregator of PDOs that will oversee functions relating to authorization and accounting of Wi-Fi connections.
3. A person, who wants to use public Wi-Fi, can do so via an app and will make payments as per usage.
4. The project will also have an app developer who will build a platform to register users and discover Wani-compliant Wi-Fi hotspots in an area and display them on the app.
5. A central registry, which will be maintained by the Centre for Development of Telematics, will record the details of app providers, PDOAs and PDOs.

Significance of the project:
Public Wi-Fi networks will 'democratize' content distribution and broadband access to millions at affordable rates. This will be the UPI (unified payments interface) of connectivity services.

Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G9T824G41.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G9T824G41.1&imageview=0)

8. Vaccine hesitancy:

Context:
An online survey has shown that as the country readies to implement its COVID-19 vaccination programme, vaccine hesitancy could be an issue that the government needs to address forthwith.

- The results showed that there was considerable hesitation even among the medical community to take the vaccine as soon as it is available.

What's the Concern?
A vaccine is one of the essential weapons in the armamentarium in our war against the pandemic. Any hesitation in accepting the vaccine will have a negative consequence on our effort to control the pandemic.

Need of the hour:
1. Proactively address the reasons behind this hesitancy.
2. Give confidence to the public by discussing the robustness of various processes involved in drug/vaccine development — clinical trial designs, conduct, monitoring, analysis, reporting and the regulatory reviews that happen before it is approved.
3. This will make the public aware about the rigorous processes followed for clinical trials, and the approval, as followed by regulators.

Vaccine Hesitancy: A generation at risk:
- Vaccine hesitancy is defined by WHO as a “delay in acceptance or refusal of vaccines despite availability of vaccination services”.
- It was one of 10 threats to global health this year.

Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G3T82TAMR.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G3T82TAMR.1&imageview=0)

9. Should you invest in Bitcoin?

Context:
Bitcoin, the cryptocurrency, has crossed $20,000 in value.
What is a Bitcoin?
An electronic cash system, which would “allow online payments to be sent directly from one party to another without going through a financial institution”.

How does a Bitcoin work?
A person, or a group of people, who went by the identity of Satoshi Nakamoto are said to have conceptualised an accounting system in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis.
1. Bitcoin from a user’s perspective is “nothing more than a mobile app or computer program that provides a personal Bitcoin wallet and allows a user to send and receive Bitcoins with them”.
2. Bitcoins are generally identified with a Bitcoin address, which comprises 26-35 alphanumeric characters starting with either “1” or “3”.
3. This address, which remains anonymous, represents the destination of a Bitcoin, or a fraction.

How are transactions maintained?
Nakamoto mooted an idea for a publicly available, open ledger that would contain all the transactions ever made, albeit in an anonymous and an encrypted form. This ledger is called blockchain.
- Considering the public and open nature of the ledger, proponents of this currency system believe it could help weed out corruption and inefficiencies in the system.

What has led to the rise in Bitcoin prices?
The prices have been driven by various factors, including increased acceptance during the pandemic.
1. Globally, large players like payments firm PayPal, and Indian lenders like State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank and Yes Bank, have given legitimacy to cryptocurrency through some of their decisions.
2. In India, accounts of several exchanges were frozen by financial institutions back in 2018 following a fiat from the Reserve Bank of India that barred banks from using their systems for cryptocurrency-related transactions. However, the Supreme Court ruled against this order in March this year.
3. The biggest factor (in the recent rise of Bitcoin prices) has been the fact that some pension funds and insurance funds took permission to park a small part of their portfolio in Bitcoins.

How is it being regulated worldwide?
While many regulators around the world have been warning against trading in Bitcoin, some have backed it. In 2017, Japan accepted Bitcoin as legal currency and even officially recognised exchanges dealing in the cryptocurrency.

InstaLinks:
3. What is Blockchain technology?

Prelims Link:
1. Various cryptocurrencies.
2. Cryptocurrencies launched by various countries.

Mains Link:
What are Cryptocurrencies? Why there is a need for regulation? Discuss.

10. Intentional genomic alteration (IGA) and GalSafe pigs:
Context:
The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved a first-of-its-kind intentional genomic alteration (IGA) in a line of domestic pigs referred to as GalSafe pigs.
- These pigs may be used for food and human therapeutics.
- This will be the first time that the regulator has approved an animal biotechnology product for both food and biomedical purposes.

What is intentional genomic alteration?
- Intentional genomic alteration in animal’s means making specific changes to the genome of the organism using modern molecular technologies that are popularly referred to as “genome editing” or “genetic engineering”.

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● Such changes in the DNA sequence of an animal may be carried out for research purposes, to produce healthier meat for human consumption and to study disease resistance in animals among other reasons.

11. Facial recognition technology:

Context:
While the facial recognition tracking (FRT) system has seen rapid deployment by multiple government departments in recent times, there are no specific laws or guidelines to regulate the use of this potentially invasive technology.

Background:
● There are currently 16 different FRT systems in active utilisation by various Central and State governments across India for surveillance, security or authentication of identity.
● Another 17 are in the process of being installed by different government departments.

What are the Concerns?
1. Absence of specific laws or guidelines poses a huge threat to the fundamental rights to privacy and freedom of speech and expression because it does not satisfy the threshold the Supreme Court had set in its landmark privacy judgment in the ‘Justice K.S. Puttaswamy Vs Union of India’ case.
2. Many institutions have not conducted “privacy impact assessment” prior to deployment of the facial recognition system (FRS).
3. Function creep: A function creep happens when someone uses information for a purpose that is not the original specified purpose (Police got permission to use the FRS by an order of the Delhi High Court for tracking missing children. Now they are using it for wider security and surveillance and investigation purpose, which is a function creep).
4. This might lead to an over-policing problem or problems where certain minorities are targeted without any legal backing or any oversight as to what is happening. Another problem that may arise is of mass surveillance, wherein the police are using the FRT system during protest.
5. Mass surveillance: If someone goes to a protest against the government, and the police are able to identify the person, then there might be repercussions.
6. The basis of the Automated Facial Recognition System (AFRS) is a Cabinet note of 2009. But the Cabinet note is not a legal substance, it’s a procedural note at best. So it does not form a valid legal system based on which the AFRS can be built.

What is facial recognition?
Facial recognition is a biometric technology that uses distinctive features on the face to identify and distinguish an individual.

● AFRS works by maintaining a large database with photos and videos of peoples’ faces. Then, a new image of an unidentified person — often taken from CCTV footage — is compared to the existing database to find a match and identify the person.
● The artificial intelligence technology used for pattern-finding and matching is called “neural networks”.

Benefits of facial recognition:
1. Improves outcomes in the area of Criminal identification and verification.
2. Easy identification amongst crowds.
3. Boosts the police department’s crime investigation capabilities.
4. Helps civilian verification when needed. No one will be able to get away with a fake ID.

Need of the hour:
The Supreme Court in the Puttaswamy judgment ruled that privacy is a fundamental right even in public spaces. And if these rights needs to be infringed, then the government has to show that such action is sanctioned by law, proportionate to the need for such interference, necessary and in pursuit of a legitimate aim.
12. Ethanol production:

Context:
The Union Cabinet has approved a modified scheme for interest subvention for ethanol production, expanding the scheme to include grain-based distilleries and not just molasses-based ones.

Implications:
- The decision would encourage ethanol production from grains like barley, maize, corn and rice.
- The scheme would boost production and distillation capacity to 1,000 crore litres and help in meeting the goal of 20% ethanol blending with petrol by 2030.

About Ethanol Blended Petrol (EBP) Programme:
- Launched in 2003 on pilot basis.
- The aim is to promote the use of alternative and environmental friendly fuels.

Ethanol:
- Ethanol can be produced from sugarcane, maize, wheat, etc which are having high starch content.
- In India, ethanol is mainly produced from sugarcane molasses by fermentation process.
- Ethanol can be mixed with gasoline to form different blends.
- As the ethanol molecule contains oxygen, it allows the engine to more completely combust the fuel, resulting in fewer emissions and thereby reducing the occurrence of environmental pollution.
- Since ethanol is produced from plants that harness the power of the sun, ethanol is also considered as renewable fuel.

Topics: Conservation related issues, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

1. Yamuna River pollution:

Context:
A ‘Monthly Progress Report’ was recently submitted by the Delhi Pollution Control Committee to the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti on cleaning Yamuna.

Key findings:
1. The level of faecal coliform (microbes from human and animal excreta) is above the desirable limit at all points tested in Yamuna in Delhi.
2. For bathing in a river, the desirable level of faecal coliform is 500 MPN/100 ml or lesser, as per the Central Pollution Control Board.
3. Besides, levels of different pollutants are above permissible limits in ground water samples from different points near the four landfills in Delhi.
4. Ground water samples from different points near landfills showed that the **hardness of water was higher than the desirable limit of 300 mg/l.**
5. The **levels of chlorine and calcium** were also above the desirable limit in all four samples.
6. The **level of sulfate** was higher than the desirable limit of 200 mg/l in some locations.

**Insta Facts:**
1. The river **Yamuna is a major tributary of river Ganges.**
2. Originates from the **Yamunotri glacier** near Bandarpunch peaks in the Mussoorie range of the lower Himalayas in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand.
3. It meets the Ganges at the Sangam in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh after flowing through Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi.
4. **Tributaries:** Chambal, Sindh, Betwa and Ken.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. River Yamuna Flows through how many states and UTs?
2. Tributaries of Yamuna.
3. Acceptable maximum limit of ammonia in drinking water?


```markdown
2. Panel formed to oversee India’s Paris climate goals:

**Context:**
The Union Environment Ministry has constituted a high-level inter-ministerial apex committee for **Implementation of Paris Agreement (AIPA)** under the chairmanship of Secretary, MoEFCC. to ensure that India is “on track” towards meeting its obligations under the Paris Agreement.

- The committee will also act as a national authority for the regulation of carbon markets in India.

**Objective:**
AIPA has been constituted with the purpose of “ensuring a coordinated response on climate change matters that protects the country’s interests and ensures that India is on track towards meeting its climate change obligations under the Paris Agreement including its submitted **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)”**.

**What are NDCs?**
NDCs are the accounts of the voluntary efforts to be made by countries that are a part of the Paris Agreement, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate the impacts of anthropogenic climate change.

- The NDCs are to be implemented in the post-2020 period.
- India had submitted its NDCs in 2015.

The three quantitative goals in the Indian NDCs are:
1. A 33-35 per cent reduction in the gross domestic product emissions intensity by 2030 from 2005 levels.
2. A 40 per cent share of non-fossil fuel based electricity by 2030.
3. Creating a carbon sink of 2.5-3 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide through afforestation programmes.
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[Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GB5814FA&imageview=0]
3. India is on track to reduce emissions:

Context:
Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar said that India was the only major G20 country that was on track towards keeping to its nationally determined commitments to halt runaway global warming.
- It had achieved 21% of its emissions intensity reduction target as a proportion of its GDP in line with its pledge to a 33-35% reduction by 2030.

Background:
These remarks were made ahead of the international Climate Ambition Summit to be jointly hosted shortly by the United Nations, the United Kingdom and France, in partnership with Chile and Italy to mark the fifth anniversary of the adoption of the Paris Agreement.

The Paris Agreement:
- The Paris Agreement, adopted at COP 21 in Paris, on December 12, 2015, constitutes a landmark agreement on climate change that seeks to limit global average temperature rise to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and endeavour to limit the increase to 1.5°C.
- The agreement, which came into force on November 4, 2016, currently has 188 parties.
- All parties to it are expected to undertake ambitious efforts to support the agreement’s goals and communicate their related intentions every five years in the form of NDCs.
- In the first round, 186 parties submitted their first NDC and two have since submitted a second one.

4. Ken-Betwa Interlinking Project Dam:

Context:
An expert panel of India’s environment ministry has deferred environment clearance for the Lower Orr Dam, which is part of the Ken-Betwa river interlinking project, and sought fresh data to decide whether a new public hearing is expected for the project or not.

About Ken-Betwa project:
Conceived as a two-part project, this is the country’s first river interlinking project.
It is perceived as a model plan for similar interstate river transfer missions.

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The project aims to transfer surplus water from the Ken river in MP to Betwa in UP to irrigate the drought-prone Bundelkhand region spread across the districts of two states mainly Jhansi, Banda, Lalitpur and Mahoba districts of UP and Tikamgarh, Panna and Chhatarpur districts of MP.

Key facts:
1. Ken and Betwa rivers originate in MP and are the tributaries of Yamuna.
2. Ken meets with Yamuna in Banda district of UP and with Betwa in Hamirpur district of UP.
3. Rajghat, Paricha and Matatila dams are over Betwa river.
4. Ken River passes through Panna tiger reserve.

Benefits of interlinking:
- Enhances water and food security.
- Proper utilisation of water.
- Boost to agriculture.
- Disaster mitigation.
- Boost to transportation.

5. NGT seeks action plan on elephant corridors:

What has the NGT said?
Directed the Odisha government to prepare an action plan within three months on 14 identified elephant corridors for providing stress-free migration to jumbos from one habitation to another in the State.

What's the issue?
- NGT had directed authorities to expedite demarcation of the corridors and the process for formal notification within a specific time frame in 2017.
- The government had sought time to inform the NGT about action plan to strengthen corridors. It, however, failed to give a concrete action on physical progress on corridors.

So, a NGO had moved the NGT seeking concrete action on strengthening of corridors.

Demands by the petitioner:
2. The government should remove the unauthorised buildings from the reserve forest land in Dhenkanal district, which sees acute human-elephant conflict, and make the forestland free from encroachment.

What are Elephant Corridors?
Elephant corridors are narrow strips of land that connect two large habitats of elephants. Elephant corridors are crucial to reduce animal fatalities due to accidents and other reasons. So fragmentation of forests makes it all the more important to preserve migratory corridors.

Why protect elephant corridors?
1. The movement of elephants is essential to ensure that their populations are genetically viable. It also helps to regenerate forests on which other species, including tigers, depend.
2. Nearly 40% of elephant reserves are vulnerable, as they are not within protected parks and sanctuaries. Also, the migration corridors have no specific legal protection.
3. Forests that have turned into farms and unchecked tourism are blocking animals’ paths. Animals are thus forced to seek alternative routes resulting in increased elephant-human conflict.
4. Weak regulation of ecotourism is severely impacting important habitats. It particularly affects animals that have large home ranges, like elephants.

Efforts at all-India level:
- ‘Gaj Yatra’, a nationwide campaign to protect elephants, was launched on the occasion of World Elephant Day in 2017.
- The campaign is planned to cover 12 elephant range states.
● The campaign aims to create awareness about elephant corridors to encourage free movement in their habitat.

Forest Ministry guide to managing human-elephant conflict (Best Practices):
1. Retaining elephants in their natural habitats by creating water sources and management of forest fires.
2. Elephant Proof trenches in Tamil Nadu.
3. Hanging fences and rubble walls in Karnataka.
4. Use of chilli smoke in north Bengal and playing the sound of bees or carnivores in Assam.
5. Use of technology: Individual identification, monitoring of elephants in south Bengal and sending SMS alerts to warn of elephant presence.

Efforts by Private Organizations in this regard:
● Asian Elephant Alliance, an umbrella initiative by five NGOs, had, last year, come together to secure 96 out of the 101 existing corridors used by elephants across 12 States in India.
● NGOs Elephant Family, International Fund for Animal Welfare, IUCN Netherlands and World Land Trust have teamed up with Wildlife Trust of India’s (WTI) in the alliance.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. IUCN conservation status of Asian Elephant.
2. Elephant corridors in India.
3. Calving period of elephants.
4. Heritage animal of India.
5. About Gaj Yatra.
6. Elephant herd is led by?
7. State with highest elephant population in India.

Mains Link:
Discuss the measures suggested by the Environment Ministry to manage man-elephant conflicts.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GI681PLT5.1&imageview=0.

6. Building bridges in the forest, to help wildlife:
Context:
Ramnagar Forest Division in Nainital district, Uttarakhand, recently built its first eco-bridge for reptiles and smaller mammals.

Examples of eco-bridges:
These include canopy bridges (usually for monkeys, squirrels and other arboreal species); concrete underpasses or overpass tunnels or viaducts (usually for larger animals); and amphibian tunnels or culverts. Usually these bridges are overlaid with planting from the area to give it a contiguous look with the landscape.

Why eco-bridges matter?
They enhance wildlife connectivity that can be disrupted because of highways or logging. Many road projects cut across animal corridors. For example, National Highway 37 through the Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong landscape in Assam, and State Highway 33 through the Nagarhole Tiger Reserve in Karnataka.
7. Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) norms:

Context:
The six-member panel constituted by the National Green Tribunal recently conducted a field-level investigation into the alleged violations of Coastal Regulatory Zone norms along the coastal belt between Karavaka and Antarvedi Pallipalem in Andhra Pradesh's East Godavari district.

- The panel sought the necessary data pertaining to the nature of permissions granted for aquaculture and extraction of beach sand.

What are CRZ norms?
Under the section 3 of Environment Protection Act, 1986 of India, Coastal Regulation Zone notification was issued in February 1991 for the first time.

- In 2018-19, fresh Rules were issued, which aimed to remove certain restrictions on building, streamlined the clearance process, and aimed to encourage tourism in coastal areas.

Objectives:
- They restrict certain kinds of activities — like large constructions, setting up of new industries, storage or disposal of hazardous material, mining, reclamation and bunding — within a certain distance from the coastline.

What are the restrictions?
- The restrictions depend on criteria such as the population of the area, the ecological sensitivity, the distance from the shore, and whether the area had been designated as a natural park or wildlife zone.
- The latest Rules have a no-development zone of 20 m for all islands close to the mainland coast, and for all backwater islands in the mainland.

For the so-called CRZ-III (Rural) areas, two separate categories have been stipulated.

1. In the densely populated rural areas (CRZ-III A) with a population density of 2,161 per sq km as per the 2011 Census, the no-development zone is 50 m from the high-tide level, as against the 200 m stipulated earlier.
2. CRZ-III B category (rural areas with population density below 2,161 per sq km) areas continue to have a no-development zone extending up to 200 m from the high-tide line.

Implementation:
While the CRZ Rules are made by the Union environment ministry, implementation is to be ensured by state governments through their Coastal Zone Management Authorities.

8. Declare exotic pets, avoid prosecution: how one-time scheme works:

Context:
The Supreme Court has upheld an Allahabad High Court order granting immunity from investigation and prosecution if one declared illegal acquisition or possession of exotic wildlife species between June and December.

What is the government’s voluntary disclosure scheme?
The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) has come out with an advisory on a one-time voluntary disclosure scheme that allows owners of exotic live species that have been acquired illegally, or without documents, to declare their stock to the government between June and December 2020.

What can be the impact?
With this scheme, the government aims to address the challenge of zoonotic diseases, develop an inventory of exotic live species for better compliance under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and regulate their import.

What kind of exotic wildlife is covered?
- The advisory has defined exotic live species as animals named under the Appendices I, II and III of the CITES.
- It does not include species from the Schedules of the Wild Life (Protection) Act 1972.
- A plain reading of the advisory excludes exotic birds from the amnesty scheme.

CITES:
- CITES is an international agreement between governments to ensure that international trade in wild animals, birds and plants does not endanger them.
- India is a member.
- Appendices I, II and III of CITES list 5,950 species as protected against over-exploitation through international trade.
- Many of these animals, such as iguanas, lemurs, civets, albino monkeys, coral snakes, tortoises, are popular as exotic pets in India.

How big a problem is illegal trade of exotic animals in India?
- The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI), which enforces anti-smuggling laws, says India has emerged as a big demand centre for exotic birds and animals with an increase in smuggling of endangered species from different parts of the world.
- Most of this exotic wildlife is imported through illegal channels and then sold in the domestic market as pets.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. What are exotic species-definition in the advisory?
2. What is CITES?
3. Classification of species under CITES?
4. What is Wildlife (Protection) Act? Species protected under various schedules of this act.

Mains Link:
Discuss the significance of recently issued guidelines for import of exotic species in the country.
9. India mulls E20 fuel to cut vehicular emissions:

Context:
Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has published a draft notification and invited comments from the public for adoption of E20 fuel as an automobile fuel.
- E20 fuel is a blend of 20% of ethanol and gasoline.

Present status:
The current permissible level of blending is 10% of ethanol though India reached only 5.6% of blending in 2019.

Benefits of E20 fuel in particular and ethanol blending in general:
1. To reduce vehicular emissions.
2. To reduce emissions of carbon dioxide, hydrocarbons, etc.
3. To reduce the oil import bill, thereby saving foreign exchange and boosting energy security.

Challenges ahead:
Compatibility of vehicles with the percentage of ethanol in the blend would have to be defined by the vehicle manufacturer.

What is ethanol?
Ethanol is a biofuel and a common by-product of biomass left by agricultural feedstock such as corn, sugarcane, hemp, potato, etc.

What has the Government done and is doing in this regard?
1. National Biofuel Coordination Committee (NBCC) has allowed Surplus rice available with the FCI to be converted to ethanol for utilization in making alcohol-based hand-sanitizers and for blending in petrol.
2. The Government of India launched the EBP programme in 2003 for undertaking the blending of ethanol in petrol to address the environmental concerns due to fossil fuel burning, provide remuneration to farmers, subsidize crude imports and achieve forex savings.
3. The National Policy on Biofuels, 2018 envisages that during an agriculture crop year when there is projected over supply of food grains as anticipated by the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers’ Welfare, the policy will allow conversion of these surplus quantities of food grains to ethanol, based on the approval NBCC.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. What is ethanol? How is it produced?
2. Difference between ethanol and molasses?
3. What is ethanol blending programme?
4. Benefits of ethanol blending?

Mains Link:
- Write a note on the 2013 EBP programme.

10. Pokhran’s ‘firefly bird diverters’ shine to save the Great Indian Bustard:

Context:
The Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) along with the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) India has come up with a unique initiative — a “firefly bird diverter” for overhead power lines in areas where Great Indian Bustard (GIB) populations are found in the wild.

Need for:
- Power lines, especially high-voltage transmission lines with multiple overhead wires, are the most important current threat for GIBs in the Thar region, and are causing unsustainably high mortality in about 15% of their population.
- The Supreme Court of India, in a recent hearing, had also directed that power lines in GIB landscapes should be placed underground.

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What are firefly bird diverters?
The diverters are called fireflies because they look like fireflies from a distance, shining on power lines in the night.
This model has been endorsed by experts from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Species Survival Commission’s (SSC) Bustard Specialist Group.
- The firefly detectors have been installed in the Pokhran tehsil in Rajasthan.

Great Indian Bustards (GIB):
IUCN status: critically endangered.
Listed in Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and in the CMS Convention and in Appendix I of CITES.
Identified as one of the species for the recovery programme under the Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats of the Ministry of Environment and Forests.
Project Great Indian Bustard — state of Rajasthan — identifying and fencing off bustard breeding grounds in existing protected areas as well as provide secure breeding enclosures in areas outside protected areas.

Habitats in India:
Only two districts in Rajasthan — Jaisalmer and Barmer — have a breeding GIB population in the wild. The bird can also be found in very small numbers in Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh.

InstaLinks:

11. Tso Kar Wetland Complex:
Context:
India now has forty-two Ramsar sites with the addition of Ladakh’s Tso Kar wetland.

About Tso Kar:
- Tso Kar Basin is a high-altitude wetland complex, consisting of two principal waterbodies, Startsapuk Tso, a freshwater lake and Tso Kar itself, a hyper saline lake, situated in the Changthang region of Ladakh, India.
- It is called Tso Kar, meaning white lake, because of the white salt efflorescence found on the margins due to the evaporation of highly saline water.
- It is also an Important Bird Area (IBA) as per BirdLife International and a key staging site in the Central Asian Flyway.

Important bird species found in the area:
Black-necked Crane (Grus nigricollis), Great Crested Grebe (Podiceps cristatus), Bar-headed Geese (Anser indicus), Ruddy Shelduck (Tadorna ferruginea), Brown-headed Gull (Larus brunnicephalus), Lesser Sand-Plover (Charadrius mongolus) and many other species.

About Ramsar convention:
- It is an international treaty for the conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- It is named after the Iranian city of Ramsar, on the Caspian Sea, where the treaty was signed on 2 February 1971.
Known officially as ‘the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat’ (or, more recently, just ‘the Convention on Wetlands’), it came into force in 1975.

Montreux Record:
Montreux Record under the Convention is a register of wetland sites on the List of Wetlands of International Importance where changes in ecological character have occurred, are occurring, or are likely to occur as a result of technological developments, pollution or other human interference. It is maintained as part of the Ramsar List. The Montreux Record was established by Recommendation of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (1990).
- Sites may be added to and removed from the Record only with the approval of the Contracting Parties in which they lie.

Currently, two wetlands of India are in Montreux record: Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan) and Loktak Lake (Manipur).
Chilka lake (Odisha) was placed in the record but was later removed from it.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About Ramsar convention.
2. About Montreux record.
3. Wetlands in India covered under the convention.
4. About Tso Kar basin.
5. Important bird species found in the area.
6. About Central Asian Flyway.

12. International Blue Flag hoisted at 8 beaches across the Country:

Context:
The beaches where the International Blue Flags were hoisted are: Kappad (Kerala), Shivrajpur (Gujarat), Ghoghla (Diu), Kasarkod and Padubidri (Karnataka), Rushikonda (Andhra Pradesh), Golden (Odisha) and Radhanagar (Andaman & Nicobar Islands).
- India had secured the International Blue Flag Certification for these 8 beaches on 6th October 2020, when an International Jury comprising of member organizations UNEP, UNWTO, UNESCO, IUCN, ILS, FEE etc. announced the award at Copenhagen, Denmark.

About Blue flag programme:
The Blue Flag Programme for beaches and marinas is run by the international, non-governmental, non-profit organisation FEE (the Foundation for Environmental Education).
- It started in France in 1985 and has been implemented in Europe since 1987, and in areas outside Europe since 2001, when South Africa joined.

What is a Blue Flag beach?
It is an 'eco-tourism model' and marks out beaches as providing tourists and beachgoers clean and hygienic bathing water, facilities/amenities, a safe and healthy environment, and sustainable development of the area.

Criteria:
There are nearly 33 criteria that must be met to qualify for a Blue Flag certification, such as the water meeting certain quality standards, having waste disposal facilities, being disabled-friendly, have first aid equipment, and no access to pets in the main areas of the beach. Some criteria are voluntary and some compulsory.

Relevant facts for Prelims:
- Spain tops the list with more than 560 such beaches; Greece and France follow.
- India is now in the league of 50 “BLUE FLAG” countries.

Is Blue Flag certification available only for beaches?
No. It can be given to a beach, marina, or sustainable boating tourism operator.
- Basically, the Blue Flag is a trademark.

InstaLinks:
www.insightsonindia.com

Prelims Link:
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1. About Blue Flag certification.

2. Programme implemented by?

3. Announced by?

4. India’s and Asia’s first beach to get this certificate.

5. Country having highest number of blue flag beaches.

Mains Link:
Write a note on the Blue flag programme.

Topics: Disaster and management.

1. In tree rings, warning of Brahmaputra floods:

Context:
Existing projections of flooding of the Brahmaputra are based on observations of past rainfall patterns, but they rely on discharge-gauge records that date back only to the 1950s.

- So, now the scientists have come up with an innovative idea in which they have tried to analyse floods by relating them to tree rings.

What does the new study suggest?
The new study is based on examinations of tree rings, which provided a picture of rainfall patterns going back seven centuries.

- The rings showed that the post 1950s period was actually one of the driest since the 1300s—there have been much wetter periods in the past.
- The tree-rings suggest that the recent decades (particularly from the 1950s to 1980s) were unusually dry. Therefore, in general, past conditions were wetter.
- It also suggests that the future will likely be wetter due to our emissions of carbon-dioxide.

How tree rings helped?
- As trees grow they incorporate information about the environmental conditions they are living in in their annual growth rings.
- Tree rings grow wider in years when soil moisture is high. Trees in the region grow more and put on wide rings in wet monsoon years.
- Conversely, in dry monsoon years (or droughts) they grow less and put on narrow rings.

Since some of these trees can live for a long time, by taking a small, pencil-thin tree-core from these trees and measuring their rings under a microscope scientists could learn more about climate conditions for the past several centuries.

Significance:
The findings are obviously relevant to Assam and Northeast India too. With this, flood risks could be compounded by planned projects in the region.

2. IFFCO gas leak: How dangerous is ammonia?

Context:
A major ammonia gas leakage at the Indian Farmers Fertilizer Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) unit at Prayagraj.

What is Ammonia?
- A tri-hydroid of nitrogen (NH3), ammonia is a building block for ammonium nitrate (NH4NO3) that is used in agriculture as a high-nitrogen fertiliser.
- It interacts immediately upon contact with moisture present in the skin, eyes, oral cavity, and respiratory tract to form ammonium hydroxide, which is very caustic and disrupts the cell membrane lipids, ultimately leading to cellular destruction.

What are main uses of ammonia?
- Ammonia is critical in the manufacturing of fertilizers, and is one of the largest-volume synthetic chemicals produced in the world.
- More than 80 per cent of ammonia made is consumed in the manufacturing of fertilizer, and most of the remainder goes into the production of formaldehyde.
**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. Acceptable maximum limit of ammonia in drinking water?
2. Permissible level of Sulfate.
3. Desirable limit of hardness of water.
4. The desirable level of faecal coliform.
5. Uses of Ammonia.

**Topics:** Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges, basics of cyber security; money-laundering and its prevention

### 1. Fight ‘fake news’: BRICS Media Forum:

**Context:**

The **Fifth BRICS Media Forum** was held virtually recently.
- At the end of the summit, representatives called for the five nations to work together to jointly combat the “virus of disinformation” in the pandemic era.

**Concerns associated:**

A common thread among members is a growing problem of disinformation or ‘fake news’.
1. The news media around the world, especially daily newspapers, and also other forms of the media, have taken a big hit during the pandemic.
2. Disinformation is being “transmitted globally at warp speed on the so-called technology platforms, notably Facebook, Twitter, Google, WhatsApp, and Instagram”.
3. It was “a major threat not just to the mainstream media but, more importantly, to the lives and well-being of tens of millions of people and the safety and integrity of society as a whole.”

**Need of the hour:**

The BRICS Media Forum can make a real difference in the fight against motivated and harmful disinformation by:
- Promoting and strengthening relevant media exchanges, workshops, training of journalists, and interactions with technology companies that are willing to work with us to contain and end the menace.
- Rigorous fact-checking and investigation by well-trained teams of journalists and the new type of specialised fact-checking organisations can be supplemented by technological solutions, with the deployment of technologies like AI, in the fight against disinformation, especially large-scale online harms.

**About BRICS Media Forum:**

China’s Xinhua news agency came up with the idea of a BRICS Media Forum in 2015 to promote media cooperation.

The forum aims to:
- Establish an efficient coordination mechanism among BRICS media.
- Advance innovation-driven media development.
- Gather stronger momentum for the development of BRICS countries through exchange and pragmatic cooperation under the mechanism.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. BRICS- origin, when South Africa joined?
2. About the New Development Bank (NDB).
3. Which are the NDB funded projects in India?
4. Fortaleza declaration is related to?
5. What is the BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement?

**Mains Link:**

What is the mandate of New Development Bank and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank? Examine whether the coming of NDB and AIIB changes the rules of development financing vis-à-vis the western dominated multilateral financing institutions?

Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GB5814DC2.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GB5814DC2.1&imageview=0)
2. Bioweapons:

Context:
Vice Chief of the Army Staff Lieutenant General S.K. Saini has said that “future wars may gravitate towards zero cost wars, wherein a very virulent pathogen may immobilise high-technology arsenal”.

- He said that “weaker militaries will continue to seek an asymmetric advantage in an unrestricted warfare milieu” while “social media will continue to be the vector of choice for the battle of narratives”.

What are Biological weapons?
Also called germ weapons, they are any of a number of disease-producing agents—such as bacteria, viruses, rickettsiae, fungi, toxins, or other biological agents—that may be utilized as weapons against humans, animals, or plants.

- Biological weapons, like chemical weapons, radiological weapons, and nuclear weapons, are commonly referred to as weapons of mass destruction.

The Biological Weapons Convention (BWC):
It is the first multilateral disarmament treaty banning the development, production and stockpiling of an entire category of weapons of mass destruction, was opened for signature on 10 April 1972. The BWC entered into force on 26 March 1975.

The BWC bans:
1. The development, stockpiling, acquisition, retention, and production of:
2. Biological agents and toxins “of types and in quantities that have no justification for prophylactic, protective or other peaceful purposes;”
3. Weapons, equipment, and delivery vehicles “designed to use such agents or toxins for hostile purposes or in armed conflict.”
4. The transfer of or assistance with acquiring the agents, toxins, weapons, equipment, and delivery vehicles described above.


3. How Maharashtra Police will use software to crack down on child porn?

Context:
The cyber wing of the Maharashtra Police recently acquired software from Interpol that would help them track down child pornography uploaded online.

What is the new software that is used by Interpol to act against child pornography online?
- The Interpol has software that uses various mechanisms like detecting nudity in images, recognising age of the person through facial structures, among other filters.
- It has in-built algorithms to look for keywords around child pornography that would for example help law enforcement agencies track forums that indulge in these crimes.
- Based on these filters, the software ‘crawler’ scans the net looking for such images, videos and text. If they find any such media, it is added to the database after which officers identify cases that could fall under child pornography.

What is the TRACE team set up by Maharashtra Cyber to counter child pornography?
- 12 officers from state went for training to the South Asian wing of Interpol. They form the core of Tactical Response against Cyber Child Exploitation (TRACE) Unit.
- The TRACE unit was primarily set up to act against child pornography in Maharashtra that is part of a larger campaign against Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) across the country since 2019.

Why has there been a boost in action against CSAM in India since 2019?

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India’s fight against Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) received a boost in 2019 when National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), a US-based non-profit that works to prevent child exploitation, started sharing tip-offs about child pornography in India with Indian agencies. These tip-offs were received by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) which then passed it on to the states where the child pornography related incident had taken place.

What is ‘Operation Blackface’ carried out in Maharashtra?
‘Operation Blackface’ is part of the larger action taken against CSAM across the country. Acting on the tip-off provided by NCRB, Maharashtra Cyber cops forward complaints to the district s where FIR’s were registered against accused persons.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About Interpol.
2. Operation Blackface.
3. About NCRB.
4. About the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC).
5. What is the TRACE team set up by Maharashtra government?

Mains Link:
India’s fight against Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM) - discuss the challenges involved.
Link: https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/maharashtra-police-interpol-child-porn-software-7096513/.

4. Karnataka appoints Regional Commissioner to compile status of ponzi cases:

Context:
In a bid to protect the depositors’ interest in Ponzi schemes run by financial companies, against whom cases have been registered, and monitor cases pending in various courts, the State government has appointed Bengaluru Regional Commissioner to compile the status of all cases that have been filed in the State and coordinate with the district administration.

Background:
The order comes in the light of the Reserve Bank of India identifying 118 finance companies in the State and seeking action against them under:

Need for such protective measures:
The finance companies running ponzi schemes could dupe investors completely and if movable and immovable properties belonging to these companies are not attached, there is a possibility that investors’ interest cannot be protected since these properties could be sold.

Ponzi Scheme:
- A Ponzi scheme is a form of fraud that lures investors and pays profits to earlier investors with funds from more recent investors.
The scheme leads victims to believe that profits are coming from product sales or other means, and they remain unaware that other investors are the source of funds.

The scheme is named after Charles Ponzi, who became notorious for using the technique in the 1920s.

**Key Provisions in the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Act, 2019:**
1. **Substantive banning clause** which bans Deposit Takers from promoting, operating, issuing advertisements or accepting deposits in any Unregulated Deposit Scheme.
2. **Creation of three different types of offences**, namely, running of Unregulated Deposit Schemes, fraudulent default in Regulated Deposit Schemes, and wrongful inducement in relation to Unregulated Deposit Schemes.
3. **Severe punishment and heavy pecuniary fines** to act as deterrent.
4. **Provisions for disgorgement or repayment of deposits** in cases where such schemes nonetheless manage to raise deposits illegally.
5. **Attachment of properties / assets by the Competent Authority**, and subsequent realization of assets for repayment to depositors.
6. **Creation of an online central database**, for collection and sharing of information on deposit-taking activities in the country.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. What are Ponzi Schemes?
2. How are they regulated?
3. Role of RBI.

**Mains Link:**
Enumerate the key features of the Banning of Unregulated Deposit Schemes Act, 2019.

**5. Beware of illegal digital lending apps: RBI:**

**Context:**
RBI has released an advisory on digital lending apps.

**Background:**
The advisory comes in the backdrop of at least three borrowers in Telangana committing suicide in the recent past, following alleged harassment by personnel of such lenders, and many more complaining of being subjected to coercive methods after defaulting on repayments.

**Highlights:**
1. Public should be wary of unauthorised digital lending platforms and mobile apps.
2. Public should verify antecedents of the company/firm offering loans online or through mobile apps.
3. Consumers should never share copies of KYC documents with unidentified persons or unverified/unauthorised apps.
4. They can report such apps/bank account information associated with the apps to law enforcement agencies concerned or use sachet portal (https://sachet.rbi.org.in) to file complaint.

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What are the issues wrt digital lending apps?

1. They attract borrowers with promise of loans in a quick and hassle-free manner.
2. But, Excessive rates of interest and additional hidden charges are demanded from borrowers.
3. Such platforms adopt unacceptable and high-handed recovery methods.
4. They misuse agreements to access data on the mobile phones of the borrowers.

What next?

Cautioning people against falling prey to “such unscrupulous activities,” the RBI said “legitimate public lending activities can be undertaken by banks, non-banking financial companies (NBFCs) registered with RBI and other entities who are regulated by the State governments under statutory provisions, such as the money lending acts of the States concerned.”


6. Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA):

Context:
The Ministry of Home Affairs has declared the entire State of Nagaland as a “disturbed area” for six more months under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA).

- MHA said the area comprising the whole of Nagaland is in such a “disturbed and dangerous condition” that the use of armed forces in aid of the civil power is necessary.

What does the AFSPA mean?
In simple terms, AFSPA gives armed forces the power to maintain public order in “disturbed areas”.

Powers given to armed forces:

1. They have the authority to prohibit a gathering of five or more persons in an area, can use force or even open fire after giving due warning if they feel a person is in contravention of the law.
2. If reasonable suspicion exists, the army can also arrest a person without a warrant; enter or search premises without a warrant; and ban the possession of firearms.
3. Any person arrested or taken into custody may be handed over to the officer in charge of the nearest police station along with a report detailing the circumstances that led to the arrest.

What is a “disturbed area” and who has the power to declare it?
A disturbed area is one which is declared by notification under Section 3 of the AFSPA. An area can be disturbed due to differences or disputes between members of different religious, racial, language or regional groups or castes or communities.

- The Central Government, or the Governor of the State or administrator of the Union Territory can declare the whole or part of the State or Union Territory as a disturbed area.

Has there been any review of the Act?
On November 19, 2004, the Central government appointed a five-member committee headed by Justice B P Jeevan Reddy to review the provisions of the act in the north eastern states.

- The committee submitted its report in 2005, which included the following recommendations: (a) AFSPA should be repealed and appropriate provisions should be inserted in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967; (b) The Unlawful Activities Act should be modified to clearly specify the powers of the armed forces and paramilitary forces and (c) grievance cells should be set up in each district where the armed forces are deployed.

The 5th report of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission on public order has also recommended the repeal of the AFSPA.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GJV84ECP3.1&imageview=0.
**Topics:** Security challenges and their management in border areas; linkages of organized crime with terrorism.

1. **NIA chargesheets ‘Khalistani’ activists:**

**Context:**
The **National Investigation Agency (NIA)** has filed a chargesheet against 16 “foreign-based Khalistanis”.

- The accused, based in the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada, have been chargesheeted under the **anti-terror Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act** for allegedly indulging in seditious activities and promoting enmity on the grounds of region and religion in the country.

**What’s the issue?**
The chargesheet alleged that the accused were involved in a conspiracy for launching a secessionist campaign under the banner of ‘Referendum 2020’ for the creation of ‘Khalistan’.

**WHAT WAS THE KHALISTAN MOVEMENT?**
It is the fight for a separate Sikh state and owes its origins to the **Punjabi Suba Movement**.

- The Akali Dal – a Sikh-dominated political party – sought to create a separate Sikh Suba or Province.

  - When the **States Reorganization Commission**, constituted to assess the demand for separate states by linguistic groups, made its recommendations, it rejected the Akali Dal’s demand.
  
  - The state was trifurcated into Punjabi-majority Punjab, Hindi-majority Haryana and the Union Territory of Chandigarh. Some hilly regions of the state were merged into Himachal Pradesh.

**WHAT WAS THE ANANDPUR SAHIB RESOLUTION?**
Shiromani Akali Dal adopted this resolution. This would serve as a blueprint for the party’s future agenda. The resolution demanded autonomy for the state of Punjab, identified regions that would be part of a separate state, and sought the right to frame its own internal constitution.

**Link:** [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G2J824HTN.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G2J824HTN.1&imageview=0).

2. **What’s in France’s draft law against ‘Islamism’?**

**Context:**
The French cabinet presented a **draft law that targets “radical Islamism”** although the word “Islamist” is not part of the text.

**Reason behind the draft:**
- The Bill comes in the wake of a series of terror attacks in recent years.
- Although in the pipeline for some time, it is being seen as a response to the **October beheading of schoolteacher Samuel Paty**.

**What does the proposed law aim to do?**
It envisages a range of measures; including school education reforms to ensure Muslim children do not drop out, stricter controls on mosques and preachers, and rules against hate campaigns online.

**After enforcement of the law:**
1. Once the law comes into force, French mosques could see increased surveillance of their activities, such as financing.
2. The government would be able to exercise supervision over the training of imams, and have greater powers to shut down places of worship receiving public subsidies if they go against “republican principles” such as gender equality.
3. There is already a ban on state employees displaying religious symbols that are “conspicuous”, such as the crucifix or hijab. This ban would now be extended beyond government bodies to any sub-contracted public service.

**InstaLinks:**
**Prelims and Mains Links:** Which country recently drafted a law against Islamism and what are its implications?
3. Spike in return of people to Bangladesh:

Context:
BSF and NCRB data says:
1. In the past four years, nearly twice the number of illegal Bangladeshi migrants were caught leaving the country compared to those coming in illegally.
2. Till December 14 this year, as many as 3,173 illegal migrants were apprehended by the BSF when they were attempting to cross over to Bangladesh, three times more than the 1,115 caught while trying to enter India through illegal means.
3. In 2019, 2018 and 2017, the numbers of Bangladeshis leaving the country stood at 2,638, 2,971 and 821 respectively, compared to the 1,351, 1,118 and 871 persons respectively who entered illegally.

Reasons behind these migrations:
Another official added that there had been a surge in numbers of illegal Bangladeshis leaving the country due to the lack of work following the COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown.

Once caught, what do security agencies do with them?
If they are apprehended, they let them go back. If they are arrested, it leads to lengthy legal procedures and the illegal migrants then have to be placed in a shelter or detention home till their nationality is proved.

Concern:
It is becoming difficult to distinguish between the Rohingya and Bangladeshis and the BSF personnel were not equipped to differentiate between the two on the basis of dialect.

Background:
India and Bangladesh share 4096.7 km. of border, which is the longest land boundary that India shares with any of its neighbours.
The India-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement (LBA) came into force following the exchange of instruments of ratification in June 2015.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. India-Bangladesh border.
2. India and neighbours- locations.
3. Bilateral trade between India and Bangladesh.
4. What is the Land Boundary Agreement?

Mains Link:
Suggest measures to address the cross-border movement of immigrants in India.
Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GRH82POBB.1&imageview=0.

4. India to bring more nations into coastal radar network:

Context:
India is planning to further expand:
1. The coastal radar chain network meant to enable real-time monitoring of the high seas for threats.
2. Assistance for capacity building to Indian Ocean littoral states.

India’s past and future efforts in this regard:
- Mauritius, Seychelles and Sri Lanka have already been integrated into the country’s coastal radar chain network.
- Plans to set up coastal radar stations in the Maldives, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Maritime data fusion in India- institutional and structural efforts:
1. Indian Navy’s Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) is the nodal agency for maritime data fusion. Located in Gurugram, it was set up after the 26/11 Mumbai terror attacks.
2. As part of information exchange regarding traffic on the high seas, the Navy has been authorised by the government to conclude white shipping agreements with 36 countries and three multilateral constructs. So far agreements have been concluded with 22 countries and one multilateral construct.

3. At the Navy’s Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) which is meant to promote Maritime Domain Awareness, three more International Liaison Officers (ILO) are expected to join soon. The ILOs from France, Japan and the U.S. have joined the centre.

4. Under Phase-I of the coastal radar chain network, 46 coastal radar stations have been set up across the country’s coastline. Under Phase-II of the project, which is currently under way, 38 static radar stations and four mobile radar stations are being set up by the Coast Guard and is in advanced stage of completion.

**About the Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR):**
- The Navy set up the IFC-IOR in December 2018 within the premises of the Information Management and Analysis Centre (IMAC) in Gurugram to track maritime movements in the region.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. What is IOC?
2. When and how was it established?
3. Who are the members and observers?
4. How France is involved in this?
5. What is IFC- IOR?
6. What is RMIFC?
7. Who established EMASOH?

**Main Link:**
Discuss how observer status at the Indian Ocean Commission help India secure its strategic objectives.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GGD83BCU.1&imageview=0

5. Inner-Line Permit:

**Context:**
Meghalaya’s civil society groups have renewed calls for British-era Inner Line Permit.

**Why Meghalaya wants ILP?**
Fear among the indigenous people of Northeast against an “illegal immigrant influx”, its effects and long-term damages. Northeast India shares borders with countries such as China, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Bhutan.

**What is an ILP?**
It is a document required by non-natives to visit or stay in a state that is protected under the ILP system. At present, four Northeastern states are covered, namely, Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland.
- Both the duration of stay and the areas allowed to be accessed for any non-native are determined by the ILP.
- The ILP is issued by the concerned state government and can be availed both by applying online or in person.

An ILP is **only valid for domestic tourists**.

**Rationale behind:**
The Inner Line Permit is an extension of the **Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act 1873**. After the British occupied the Northeast, the colonisers started exploiting the region and its resources for economic benefits.
● They first started tea plantations and oil industries in Brahmaputra Valley.
● The indigenous tribes living in the hill areas would regularly conduct raids into the plains to loot and plunder, marauding the tea gardens, oil rigs and trading posts set up by the British East India Company.
● It was in this context that the BEFR 1873 was promulgated.

Should Meghalaya be brought under ILP?
The ILP is considered the only mechanism to contain influx in the state. Influx is perceived as dangerous because it could upset the fragile demographic balance of the tribes of Meghalaya.
● Influx definitely is a matter of concern but it requires better solutions than the ILP, not instant solutions demanded by pressure groups. Indeed, how can such a far-reaching policy be decided by one or two groups?

InstaLinks:
Prelims link: Since ILP is frequently in News, concentrate on:
1. Map based questions involving North-Eastern states.
2. NE state and their international neighbours.

Mains link:
Analyse the issue of imposition of ILP system in India’s northeastern states and the dilemma this system has posed to the Indian government.
Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G9K843J1B.1&imageview=0.

Topics: Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.
1. CBI Brings Out Updated Crime Manual After 15 Years:
Context:
The agency had set up a task force under Additional Director Praveen Sinha to make necessary changes in the crime manual, a set of guidelines for the investigating officer to follow while probing a case, which was last changed in 2005.
● The changes were proposed after factoring in the changing crime landscape, evidence collection, international treaties, emergence of new avenues to track criminals among others.

What is CBI’s crime manual?
It lays down the standard operating procedures for the agency to implement in matters pertaining to special investigations, economic offences and cyber crimes. The crime manual dictates the working of the investigative agency and lays down procedures on how the agency is expected and supposed to act in its investigations.

New chapters and changes introduced:
1. Changes in the standard operating procedures -- especially to probe digital crimes in the cyber world and those across national boundaries.
2. Quickening the pace of investigation: Cases at the heads-of-branches level will now have to be completed within six months while those supervised at the senior level of heads of zones will have to be completed within nine months from the earlier deadlines of around one year.
3. A new chapter on procedures to be followed while conducting investigations abroad and coordinating and operating with Interpol.
4. A chapter on investigations in the digital world and cyber crime.
5. A new standard operating procedure for handling digital evidence has been introduced in the chapter.

Significance and implications of the new manual:
The new manual aims to break the silos while handling larger and complex cases by focussing more on team approach in the agency to achieve better results.
● The revised manual takes into account the latest laws, Supreme Court judgements and their interpretations which are condensed into manual form, making it easy for the investigating officer to easily refer to and follow them.

About CBI:
1. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) is the premier investigating agency of India.

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2. Operating under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions, the CBI is headed by the Director.
3. CBI, India’s first agency to investigate corruption, the Special Police Establishment, was set up in 1941, six years before independence from British rule to probe bribery and corruption in the country during World War II.
4. In 1946, it was brought under the Home Department and its remit was expanded to investigate corruption in central and state governments under the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act.
5. The DSPE acquired its popular current name, Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), through a Home Ministry resolution in 1963.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About CBI and its establishment.
3. What is General Consent?

Mains Link:
4. What happens when general consent is withdrawn by states?

2. ‘Tour of Duty’ recruitment model:

Context:
Months after it was first proposed by the Army, India’s defence establishment is actively considering expanding the scope of the ‘Tour of Duty’ model of recruitment to the Air Force and Navy as well.
There are plans to expand the scheme over the next few years to ensure that close to 40 per cent of the strength of the Army is recruited through it.
- India’s political leadership is keen on the scheme, given its future potential to generate large-scale employment, and is pushing to working out its modalities.

What is the proposed model?
Currently, the only option apart from regular permanent commission into the armed forces is the Short Service Commission, in which officers are recruited for a period of 14 years. A large number of SSC officers eventually opt for permanent commission, subject to eligibility.
- The Army had, in May, proposed the ‘Tour of Duty’ model of recruitment that would let young individuals voluntarily serve for a temporary period of three years.
- It will be a voluntary engagement.
- It is for youths who “do not want to make defence services their permanent vocation, but still want to experience the thrill and adventure of military professionalism”.
- The proposal is a shift from the concept of permanent service/job in the Armed Forces, towards ‘internship’/temporary experience for three years.

Benefits for the government:
1. There are immense financial benefits to the organisation due to reduction in pay and gratuity payouts.
2. The cost of a three-year service per officer will be a fraction of the cost incurred on Short Service Commission (SSC) officers.
3. The cost incurred on an officer, who leaves after 10 or 14 years, is Rs 5 crore-Rs 6.8 crore, which includes the cost of pre-commission training, pay, allowances, gratuity, leave encashment among others. The corresponding cost for a three-year service will be Rs 80 lakh-85 lakh.
4. SSC officers have the option to join the service permanently, which further increases the cost incurred, including pension bills.
5. For soldiers, who usually serve for 17 years, the Army has calculated a lifetime savings of Rs 11.5 crore per person, as compared to a three-year service.

Benefits for citizens and the country:
1. It will help to “channelise the youth energy into positive utilisation of their potential”.
2. Rigorous military training and habits inculcated will lead to healthy citizenry.
3. The entire nation will benefit from “trained, disciplined, confident, diligent and committed” young men or women who have done the three-year service.
4. An “initial survey” has indicated that the corporate sector will prefer to hire such youths rather than fresh graduates.

Need for:
- The Army’s pay and pension bill has been increasingly steeply over the years, accounting for 60% of its budget allocation.
- According to a report of Standing Committee of Defence, 2019, the deficiency in officer cadre of Indian Army stood at approximate 14 per cent.
- Advocates of this scheme also cite “resurgence of nationalism and patriotism”, and the fact that “unemployment in our country is a reality”.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. SSC vs Permanent Commission in armed forces.
2. How can civilians be recruited into armed forces?

Mains Link:
Discuss the significance of Tour of Duty (ToD) scheme.

GENERAL STUDIES – 4

1. Govt. to use poll roll data to allot COVID-19 vaccine:
COVID operational guidelines were released by the Health Ministry recently. Accordingly:

1. The COVID Vaccine Intelligence Network (Co-WIN) system, a digitised platform, will be used to track the enlisted beneficiaries and the COVID-19 vaccines on a real-time basis.
2. The latest electoral roll for the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections will be used to identify the priority population over the age of 50.
3. At the vaccination site, only pre-registered beneficiaries will be vaccinated in accordance with the prioritisation, and there will be no provision for on-the-spot registrations.
4. Vaccine will be offered first to healthcare workers, frontline workers and to persons above 50, followed by persons younger than 50 with associated co-morbidities based on the pandemic situation, and finally to the remaining population based on the disease epidemiology and vaccine availability.
5. The priority group of above 50 years may be further subdivided into those above 60 and those between 50 to 60 years for purposes of a phased roll-out, based on the pandemic situation and vaccine availability.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G1S82MJCH.1&imageview=0.
### FACTS FOR PRELIMS

1. **Indian peacock soft-shell turtle:**
   - It is a riverine turtle **endemic to India, Nepal, and Bangladesh.**
   - They are generally **omnivorous** (predominantly carnivorous) and nocturnal.
   - **Conservation Status:**
     1. Vulnerable on IUCN Redlist.
     2. The species is also listed under Appendix I of CITES.
   - Belongs to the family **Trionychidae.**

2. **What is Chardham Project?**
   - The project comprises improvement as well as the development of 889 km length of national highways.
   - The project will connect Badrinath Dham, Kedarnath Dham, Gangotri, Yamunotri, and part of the route leading to Kailash Mansarovar yatra.
   - **Context:** Environmentalists have alleged that the contractors deputed by the government to make roads as part of the Chardham project are violating the Supreme Court orders on the appropriate road width to be followed in mountainous terrain.

3. **What is a PMI?**
   - **PMI or a Purchasing Managers’ Index (PMI)** is an indicator of business activity — **both in the manufacturing and services sectors.**
   - It is a survey-based measures that asks the respondents about changes in their perception of some key business variables from the month before.
   - It is calculated separately for the manufacturing and services sectors and then a composite index is constructed.
   - A figure above 50 denotes expansion in business activity. Anything below 50 denotes contraction.
   - Higher the difference from this mid-point greater the expansion or contraction.

4. **Green Charcoal Hackathon:**
   - Launched by NVVN (NTPC VidyutVyapar Nigam), a wholly-owned subsidiary company of NTPC Ltd.
   - It is a technology challenge with an aim to fast-track technology developments conducted by NVVN in partnership with EESL (Energy Efficiency Services Ltd).
   - The purpose of the event is to leverage the innovative Indian mind to bridge the technology gap, with the prime objective to:
     1. Clean the air by eliminating farm fire, producing renewable energy out of the agro residue.
     2. Promote local entrepreneurship.
     3. Increase the income of the farmers.
   - The ultimate goals is to reduce the carbon footprint of the nation.

5. **Aadi Mahotsav:**
   - The virtual edition of the Aadi Mahotsav – Madhya Pradesh launched.
   - Aadi Mahotsav is a **national tribal festival and a joint initiative** of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, Government of India & Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED).
   - The festival showcases traditional art and handicrafts and cultural heritage of the country.

6. **SCO Online International Exhibition:**
   - SCO Online Exhibition on Shared Buddhist Heritage was launched at the **19th Meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Council of Heads of Government (SCO CHG),** held in New Delhi recently.

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● It is the first ever of its kind. It was developed and curated by the National Museum, New Delhi, in active collaboration with SCO member countries.

● Participants: Museums from India, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyz Republic, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

7. Bihar plans migratory bird festival to raise awareness about them:

● Bihar is holding a bird festival for the first time as part of its initiative to save migratory birds that arrive in the state in large numbers every year.

● The festival is being organised in eastern Bihar’s Bhagalpur district which has special significance. This was because the 60-kilometre-long stretch of the Vikramshila Dolphin Sanctuary between Sultanganj and Kahalgaon had long been a hub of migratory birds.

● Some prominent migratory birds arriving in Bhagalpur include bar-headed goose, steppe eagle, Ferruginous duck, Eurasian curlew, white wagtail, great crested grebe, common greenshank and Eurasian coot.

8. Sumdorong Chu:

● In 1986–87, a military standoff took place between India and China in the Sumdorong Chu Valley bordering the Tawang district, Arunachal Pradesh and Cona County, Tibet.

● The standoff was the first military confrontation along the disputed McMahon Line after the 1962 war and gave rise to fears of escalation.

9. What is Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) test?

NMR spectroscopy is an analytical chemistry technique used in quality control and research for determining the content and purity of a sample as well as its molecular structure.

Why in News?
10 out of 13 honey brands from India have failed in this ‘purity test’.

● The NMR test is not required by Indian law for honey that is being marketed locally but is needed for export.

10. International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS):

Context:
The International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) obtained membership of International Association of Insurance Supervisors (IAIS).

About IAIS:
- Established in 1994, the IAIS headquartered in Switzerland is a voluntary membership organization of insurance supervisors and regulators from more than 200 jurisdictions, constituting 97% of the world’s insurance premiums.
- It is the international standard-setting body responsible for developing and assisting in the implementation of principles, standards and other supporting material for the supervision of the insurance sector.
- The IAIS also provides a forum for Members to share their experiences and understanding of insurance supervision and insurance markets.
- In recognition of its collective expertise, the IAIS is routinely called upon by the G20 leaders and other international standard setting bodies.

11. U.S. to block import of ‘slave labour’ cotton from China:
The United States will block imports of cotton that, it says, is harvested with “slave labour” in China’s Xinjiang region.
- Beijing has come under intense international criticism over its policies in the resource-rich territory, where rights groups say as many as one million Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities are being held in internment camps.

12. Not using masks flouts fundamental rights: SC:
The Supreme Court has observed that People who do not wear masks in public and follow physical distancing norms violate the fundamental rights of others amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

13. Lottery, gambling and betting taxable under GST Act: SC:
- The court held that lottery, betting and gambling were “actionable claims” and came within the definition of ‘goods’ under Section 2(52) of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017.
- The Court said the levy of GST on lotteries did not amount to “hostile discrimination”.

What’s the issue?
Arguments were made by Skill Lotto Solutions and other lottery agents. They said lottery was not ‘goods’ and GST on it was illegal.

14. “Culture of Peace” session:
- Organised by the UN General Assembly.
- The UN has organised such sessions each year since 1997.
- The Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on September 13, 1999.
- This occurred after ten months of negotiations in the context of preparations for the International Year for the Culture of Peace.

At the latest session, India asked the United Nations to expand its criticism of hatred and violence against religions beyond the three Abrahamic religions — Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

15. Arecibo telescope:
Context:
Puerto Rico’s massive Arecibo telescope, famous for its stellar contributions to astronomy, collapsed.
Key points:
- Built in 1963, it is the second-largest single-dish radio telescope in the world.
- Being the most powerful radar, scientists employed Arecibo to observe planets, asteroids and the ionosphere, making several discoveries over the decades, including finding prebiotic molecules in distant galaxies, the first exoplanets, and the first millisecond pulsar.
16. **Navy Day 2020:**
Every year, India celebrates **December 4 as Navy Day to commemorate Operation Trident**, a key offensive during the 1971 India-Pakistan War, when the **Indian Navy inflicted heavy damage on Pakistani vessels in Karachi harbour**.
- On December 4, under Operation Trident, the Indian Navy sank three vessels near the Pakistani port city of Karachi.

17. **Himachal Pradesh wants GI status for five products:**
These include- **Karsog Kulth, Thangi of Pangi, Chamba Metal Crafts, Chamba Chukh, and Rajmah of Bharmour**.

**How many registered GIs do Himachal currently have?**
- There are eight GI tags, that include four handicrafts (Kullu Shawl, Chamba Rumal, Kinnauri Shawl and Kangra Paintings), three agricultural products (Kangra Tea, Basmati and Himachali Kala Zeera) and one manufactured product (Himachali Chulli Oil).

18. **What is Mahaparinirvan Divas?**
On December 6, the country observed Mahaparinirvan Diwas, which marks the death anniversary of Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar.

**What is Mahaparinirvan?**
Parinirvan is one of the major principles and goals of Buddhism. The Sanskrit term (written in Pali as parinibbana) means "nirvana after death", which refers to the achievement of nirvana after the body dies. As per the Buddhist text, i.e. Mahaparinibbana Sutta, the death of Lord Buddha at the age of 80 is considered as the original Mahaparinirvan.

**Why is BR Ambedkar linked to it?**
Dr Ambedkar passed away on December 6, 1956, just a few days after completing his last work, **The Buddha and His Dhamma**.
- Because of his stature and contributions to the eradication of untouchability in India, he was considered to be a Buddhist guru.
- His followers and supporters believe that Ambedkar was as influential, pure and blessed as Lord Buddha. And this is the reason Ambedkar's death anniversary is referred to as Mahaparinirvan Divas.

19. **HL-2M Tokamak:**

**Context:**
China successfully powered up its “artificial sun” nuclear fusion reactor (HL-2M Tokamak reactor) for the first time marking a great advance in the country’s nuclear power research capabilities.

**Key Points:**
- The HL-2M Tokamak reactor is China’s largest and most advanced nuclear fusion experimental research device.
- The mission is named Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak (EAST).
- Located in Sichuan province and completed late last year, the reactor is often called an “artificial sun” on account of the enormous heat and power it produces.
- It uses a powerful magnetic field to fuse hot plasma and can reach temperatures of over 150 million degrees Celsius- approximately ten times hotter than the core of the sun.
20. Tharu tribals:

Context:
The Uttar Pradesh government has recently embarked upon a scheme to take the unique culture of its ethnic Tharu tribe across the world.

The scheme involves creating homestays. The idea is to offer tourists an experience of living in the natural Tharu habitat, in traditional huts made of grass collected mainly from the forests.

Who exactly are the Tharu people?
- The community belongs to the Terai lowlands, amid the Shivaliks or lower Himalayas. Most of them are forest dwellers, and some practice agriculture.
- The word tharu is believed to be derived from sthavir, meaning followers of Theravada Buddhism.
- The Tharus live in both India and Nepal. In the Indian terai, they live mostly in Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar.
- Tharu women have stronger property rights than is allowed to women in mainstream North Indian Hindu custom.

21. Vadhan port project:
- The Vadhan port will be India’s 13th major port.
- It has been planned as an ‘All Weather, All Cargo’ satellite port to enhance capabilities in handling deep draft ships and larger vessels.
- The port project is part of the Centre’s Sagarmala initiative that aims to make Indian ports major contributors to the country’s GDP.
- The Port will have a dedicated road and rail service so as not to interfere with the local traffic, thereby avoiding any clutter within the local transportation.
- It will be developed on a “landlord model”.

Why in News?
Villagers in Maharashtra’s Dahanu are objecting to the Vadhan port project. They believe the project will be detrimental to the environment and their livelihoods.

22. Lakshadweep first UT to become 100% organic:
- After Sikkim, Lakshadweep is the first Union Territory to become 100 per cent organic as all farming is carried out without the use of synthetic fertilisers and pesticides, providing access to safer food choices and making agriculture a more environment-friendly activity.
- The ministry of agriculture has declared the island as organic.

Background:
India’s smallest Union Territory, Lakshadweep is an archipelago consisting of 36 islands with an area of 32 sq km. It is a union district Union Territory and comprises 12 atolls, three reefs, five submerged banks and ten inhabited islands. The islands comprise 32 sq km. The Capital is Kavaratti and it is also the principal town of the UT.
23. Bangladesh signed its first Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA):
- This is the first PTA Bangladesh has signed with any country in the world.
- In 1971, Bhutan was the first country in the world, followed by India as the second, to recognise Bangladesh as an independent country.

24. Two new Zoos granted recognition by Central government:
The Rajgir Zoo Safari in Nalanda, Bihar and Shaheed Ashfaque Ullah Khan Prani Udyaan in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh were granted recognition.
- Approved at the 37th General Body meeting of Central Zoo Authority.

25. Investment Promotion Award 2020:
The United Nations (UNCTAD) has declared Invest India- the National Investment Promotion Agency of India- as a winner of the 2020 United Nations Investment Promotion Award.
- The award recognizes and celebrates the outstanding achievements and best practices of Investment Promotion Agencies (IPAs) across the globe.

26. Sri Lanka to get $300 mn Chinese tyre factory:
Sri Lanka has announced the first large-scale Chinese investment in manufacturing in the country, a $300-million tyre factory near a strategic deep-sea port.
- The factory will be adjacent to the Hambantota port, which was leased to a Chinese company in 2017 after Sri Lanka failed to service the $1.4-billion debt from Beijing used to build it.

Background:
Western nations, as well as regional power India, have long been concerned about Chinese influence in Sri Lanka through projects under its gargantuan Belt and Road infrastructure initiative.

27. Partners in Population and Development (PPD):
Context:
Inter-Ministerial Conference by Partners in Population and Development (PPD). India took part in it.
About PPD:
- It is an intergovernmental organisation for promoting south-south cooperation in the fields of reproductive health, population, and development.
- Its Secretariat is located in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Currently, PPD has the membership of 26 developing countries, representing more than 59% of the world’s population.
- Launched at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), when ten developing countries from Asia, Africa and Latin America formed an intergovernmental alliance to help implement the Cairo Program of Action (POA).
- This POA, endorsed by 179 nations, stresses the need to establish mechanisms to promote development through the sharing of experiences in reproductive health (RH) and family planning (FP)
within and among countries and to promote effective partnerships among the governments, NGOs, research institutions and the private sector.

28. What is the Northern Ireland protocol and why is it needed?
Following Brexit, Northern Ireland’s 310-mile border with the Republic of Ireland is the only land border between the UK and the European Union (EU). Under an arrangement known as the Northern Ireland protocol, goods will not need to be checked along the Irish border when the new UK-EU relationship begins on 1 January.

29. Mini Kaziranga:
- Assam’s Pobitora Wildlife Sanctuary is also known as ‘Mini Kaziranga’.
- It has the highest density of one-horned rhinos in the world and second highest concentration in Assam after Kaziranga National Park.

Why in News?
Too many cattle robbing rhinos of nutrition in ‘Mini Kaziranga’.
- This has been confirmed by the death of two rhinos whose alimentary canals had a high load of worms because of nutritional stress caused by dry reeds and other such “junk food” of the wilderness.

30. Karnataka Assembly adopts Bill against cow slaughter:
The Karnataka Prevention of Slaughter and Preservation of Cattle Bill, 2020 has stringent penal provisions ranging from imprisonment of three to seven years and penalty of ₹50,000 to ₹7 lakh for violations.
- The Bill makes even selling/disposing the cattle for slaughtering or intentionally killing the cattle an offence. If the accused is convicted, then the court can forfeit the confiscated cattle, vehicle, premises, and material on behalf of the State government.
- The government can appoint a tahsildar or officer not below the rank of veterinary officer of the Animal Husbandry and Fisheries Department as competent authority to look into various issues related to slaughtering under the proposed legislation.

31. What is Submarine Day, celebrating the memory of INS Kalvari?
- Celebrated on December 8th.
- It was on December 8 that the Indian Naval Ensign was unfurled on INS Kalvari, the first submarine to be inducted in the Indian Navy, at Riga in Latvia, the erstwhile USSR, in 1967.
- Kalvari is the Malayalam name for Tiger Shark, a predator in the Indian Ocean.
- The Kalvari was decommissioned in 1996 after 29 years of service.

32. Cattle, buffalo meat residue found in Indus Valley vessels:
A new study has found the presence of animal products, including cattle and buffalo meat, in ceramic vessels dating back about 4,600 years at seven Indus Valley Civilisation sites in present-day Haryana and Uttar Pradesh.

Key findings:
- About 50-60% of domestic animal bones found at Indus Valley sites come from cattle/ buffalo.
- The high proportions of cattle bones may suggest a cultural preference for beef consumption across Indus populations, supplemented by the consumption of mutton/ lamb.
- Lipid residues in Indus pottery show a dominance of animal products in vessels, such as the meat of non-ruminant animals like pigs, ruminant animals like cattle or buffalo and sheep or goat, as well as dairy products.
33. ‘Jagananna Jeeva Kranthi’ scheme:
Launched by the Andhra Pradesh government.
- Under which 2.49 lakh sheep and goats will be distributed to women in a phased manner at a cost of ₹1,869 crore.
- The scheme will help improve the living standards of women with less investment.

34. HelpAge India presented UN Population Award for 2020:
HelpAge India has been presented the UN Population Award for 2020 (institutional category).
- For the first time in the history of the UN Population Award, the honour is being conferred on an Indian institution.
- The last time the Award came to an Indian was 28 years ago, back in 1992, when it was awarded to Mr. J.R.D. Tata as an individual laureate. HelpAge India has been working for ‘the cause and care of disadvantaged older persons to improve their quality of life’ for over four decades.

About the Award:
Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1981, the United Nations Population Award recognises contributions in the fields of population and reproductive health.

35. Better Than Cash Alliance:
- It is a partnership of governments, companies, and international organizations that accelerates the transition from cash to digital payments in order to reduce poverty and drive inclusive growth, and to advance the Sustainable Development Goals.
- The United Nations Capital Development Fund serves as the secretariat.
- India became a member of the Better Than Cash Alliance in 2015.

36. Hanukkah:
It is a Jewish festival commemorating the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem at the time of the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucid Empire. It is also known as the Festival of Lights.

37. Ischaemum janarthanamii:
- It is a novel species of Muraingrass identified by scientists in the plateaus of Western Ghats of Goa.
- The species was named Ischaemumjanarthanamiiin honour of Prof. M. K. Janarthanam, Professor of Botany, Goa University.
- It grows on low altitude lateritic plateaus in the outskirts of Bhagwan Mahavir National Park, Goa.
- The vegetation is exposed to extreme climatic conditions like desiccation in drier months and soils with low nutrient availability. However, withstanding these, the species has adapted to survive harsh conditions and blossom every monsoon.

Background:
- Muraingrasses are known for their ecological and economic importance, such as fodder.
- Globally 85 species are known from Ischaemum, of which 61 species are exclusively found in India.
- The Western Ghats have 40 species with the highest concentration of the genus.

38. Koilwar Bridge:
- Koilwar Bridge constructed over Sone river in Bihar inaugurated.
- Length: 1.5 km.
39. **Worlds' first, satellite-based narrowband-IoT network in India:**

BSNL, in partnership with Skylo, to introduce worlds’ first, satellite-based narrowband-IoT network in India.
- This new ‘Made in India’ Solution, which is indigenously developed by Skylo, will connect with BSNLs satellite-ground infrastructure and provide PAN-India coverage, including Indian seas.
- The coverage will be so vast that it will not leave any dark patch within the boundary of India, from Kashmir &Ladakh to Kanyakumari, and from Gujarat to the North East, including the Indian seas.

40. **What is WHO Pre-qualification?**

The Prequalification project, set up in 2001, is a service provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) to facilitate access to medicines that meet unified standards of quality, safety and efficacy for HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.
- The prequalification process consists of a transparent, scientifically sound assessment, which includes dossier review, consistency testing or performance evaluation and site visits to manufacturers.

**Context:**

A single-dose injectable Typhoid Conjugate Vaccine of Biological E has been pre-qualified by the World Health Organisation, making the vaccine maker one of two pre-qualified suppliers of TCV to UN agencies.

41. **Maharashtra to give film sector industry status:**

Maharashtra government has moved to sanction industry status to the film and entertainment sector.
- The term 'industry status' has not actually been specifically defined in any legislation in India.
- Conferring industry status basically entails an inclusion in the State/Central industrial policy.

**The immediate benefits would be:** (i) getting loans with less trouble at lower interest rates; (ii) enabling large investors to be financing partners; (iii) attracting equity investment in the sector; and (iv) enabling developers to refinance their existing debts.

42. **Rules notified to serve warrants in Maldives:**

The Ministry of Home Affairs has notified rules for Indian courts to send summons or search warrants to accused persons in the Maldives and wanted in India, as per an agreement signed between the two countries.

43. **MahaSharad:**

- To be launched by Maharashtra Social Justice Department.
- It is a digital platform which will provide for free the tools required by differently-abled people.
- **MahaSharad** stands for Maharashtra System of Health Rehabilitation and Assistance for Divyang.

44. **National Family Health Survey for the 2019-20 fiscal (NFHS-5):**

**Assam Related key findings:**
- **Sex ratio in Assam** is now skewed in favour of females. There were 1,012 females born during 2019-2020 per 1,000 males. The sex ratio in 2015-16 was 993 females per a thousand males.
- But compared to the last survey, **more women and men were found to have tied the knot before reaching the permissible age** (31.8% of the women who were surveyed said they married before they turned 18. The percentage of such women in 2015-16 was 30.8).
- **The total fertility rate**, however, dipped from 2.2 children per woman in NFHS-4 to 1.9 in the latest survey.
- **Female sterilisation** also dropped from 9.5% to 9% between the two surveys while male sterilisation remained constant at 0.1%.
- The survey found **more children aged 6-59 months were anaemic or with low haemoglobin count** than five years ago.
45. **Myristica swamp treefrog:**

- It is a rare arboreal species endemic to the Western Ghats.
- They are active only for a few weeks during their breeding season.
- Before the end of the breeding season, the female frogs along with their male counterparts descend on the forest floor.
- The female digs the mud and lays eggs in shallow burrows in mud. After breeding and egg-laying, they retreat back to the high canopies of the tree and remain elusive till next breeding season.

**Context:**
It has been recorded for the first time north of the Shencottah gap in the Vazhachal Reserve Forest in Kerala’s Thrissur district.

46. **Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve:**

*Kaziranga National Park and Tiger Reserve* can now be explored by boats while bicycle tracks are also being finalised. One can go trekking too. But the new activities are beyond the 1,302 sq km Kaziranga’s core area of 482 sq km.

**Key Facts:**
1. It is a national park in Assam.
2. Formed in 1908 on the recommendation of Mary Curzon, the park is located in the edge of the Eastern Himalayan biodiversity hotspots – Golaghat and Nagaon district.
3. It hosts two-thirds of the world’s great one-horned rhinoceroses.
4. It is a World Heritage Site.
5. It is also recognized as an Important Bird Area by BirdLife International for the conservation of avifaunal species.
6. Much of the focus of conservation efforts in Kaziranga are focused on the ‘big four’ species— Rhino, Elephant, Royal Bengal tiger and Asiatic water buffalo.
7. Kaziranga is crisscrossed by four main rivers — Brahmaputra, Diphlu, Mora Diphlu and Mora Dhansiri.

47. **What is the diversity requirements that Indian companies need to meet?**

- All public companies which are listed on stock exchanges and companies with either a paid-up capital of Rs 100 crore or annual turnover over Rs 300 crore are required to have at least one woman board member under the Companies Act.
- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) further requires, since April 1, 2020, that the top 1000 listed companies by market capitalisation have a woman board member who is also an independent director.

48. **Lancet Citizens’ Commission on Reimagining India’s Health System:**

- It is a cross-sector initiative to develop a citizens’ roadmap to achieving universal health coverage (UHC) in India over a period of ten years.
- It was launched recently.
- It was a first-of-its-kind participatory, countrywide initiative, in collaboration with world’s leading health journal The Lancet and the Lakshmi Mittal and Family South Asia Institute, Harvard University.
- The mission of the Commission is to lay out the path to achieving UHC in India in the coming decade, working with all stakeholders.

The Commission will be guided by four principles: first, UHC covers all health concerns; secondly, prevention and long-term care are key. Thirdly, the concern is financial protection for all health costs, and finally, aspiring for a health system that can be accessed by all who enjoy the same quality.

49. **Black Fungus:**

- Also called as Mucormycosis or zygomycosis.
- It is a serious but rare fungal infection.
Caused by a group of molds called mucormycetes which exist in the environment. Mucormycosis mainly affects people who have health problems or take medicines that lower the body’s ability to fight germs and sickness. The symptoms are face numbness, one-side nose obstructions or swelling of eyes, or pain. Early detection and treatment can help.

Why in News?
Occurrence of Covid triggered mucormycosis with high morbidity and mortality.

50. **Himgiri**:
- Himgiri is the first of the three stealth frigates being built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata, under Project 17A for the Navy.
- Under the Project 17A program, a total of seven ships, four at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) and three ships at GRSE are being built with enhanced stealth features, advanced indigenous weapon and sensor fit along with several other improvements.

51. **Saksham**:
- It is the 5th and the last Offshore Patrol Vessel designed and built by Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) for Indian Coast Guard.
- Launched recently.
- These OPVs will form a formidable part of the Coast Guard Fleet and used for protection of Exclusive Economic Zone of territorial water of the Nation.

52. **What is the US State Sponsor of Terrorism list? What are its implications?**
The US Secretary of State has been given powers to designate countries that “have repeatedly provided support for acts of international terrorism” as “State Sponsors of Terrorism”. The US can place four categories of sanctions on countries part of the list:
2. A ban on defence exports and sales.
3. Certain controls over exports of dual use items.
4. Miscellaneous financial and other restrictions.

Why in News?
U.S. lifts Sudan off terror list.

How many countries are there in the list now?
After Sudan’s delisting, three countries remain with the designation: Syria (listed in 1979), Iran (1984) and North Korea (2017).

53. **DakPay**:
It is a new digital payment application launched by the Department of Posts and the India Post Payments Bank (IPPB).
- DakPay is a suite of digital financial and assisted banking services provided through the postal network to cater to the financial needs of various sections of society, particularly those living in rural areas.
- The services include free-of-cost money receipts and transfers at doorsteps, and scanned QR codes, to make payments for a range of utility and banking services.

54. **About FSDC**:
- The Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) was constituted in December, 2010.
- The FSDC was set up to strengthen and institutionalise the mechanism for maintaining financial stability, enhancing inter-regulatory coordination and promoting financial sector development.
- It is not a statutory body.
- The Council is chaired by the Union Finance Minister.
55. Himalayan serow:
- Sighted for the first time in the Himalayan cold desert region (Himachal Pradesh).
- Himalayan serow resembles a cross between a goat, a donkey, a cow, and a pig.
- It’s a medium-sized mammal with a large head, thick neck, short limbs, long, mule-like ears, and a coat of dark hair.
- Categorised as ‘vulnerable’ in the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
- It is listed under Schedule I of The Wildlife Protection Act, 1972, which provides absolute protection.

56. Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog:
- Constituted in 2019, the Aayog is a high powered permanent apex advisory body with the mandate to help the Central Government to develop appropriate programmes for conservation, sustainable development and genetic upgradation of indigenous breeds of cows.
- It comes under the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.
- Rashtriya Kamdhenu Aayog will function as an integral part of Rashtriya Gokul Mission.

57. The Meghdoot award:
It is given every year by the Postal Department for excellence in postal service.

58. CMS-01 satellite:
- It is a communication satellite launched by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on board the PSLV-C50.
- CMS-01 is a communications satellite envisaged for providing services in extended C Band of the frequency spectrum.
- Its coverage will include the Indian mainland, and the Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands, ISRO said.
- The satellite is expected to have a life of more than seven years.

59. List of ‘trusted’ telecom gear firms planned:
- The Cabinet Committee on Security has approved the National Security Directive on Telecommunication Sector mandating telecom service providers to procure equipment from sources designated to be “trusted”.
- This was done in order to maintain the integrity of the supply chain security.
- The government will declare a list of trusted sources/products for the benefit of telecom service providers.

60. Pak. approves chemical castration of sex offenders:
- Pakistan has approved the chemical castration of rapists as part of sweeping new legislation sparked.
- New laws will see rape cases expedited through the courts and create the country’s first national sex offenders register.

61. Haldibari-Chilahati Rail Link:
- The Haldibari-Chilahati rail link was made functional from December 17.
- It is the 5th rail link between India and Bangladesh.
● This rail link was operational till 1965. This was part of the broad gauge main route from Kolkata to Siliguri during partition. However, the war of 1965 effectively cut off all the railway links between India and the then East Pakistan.
● After the partition in 1947, seven rail links were operational between India and the then East Pakistan (up to 1965).
● Presently, there are four operational rail links between India and Bangladesh. They are Petrapole (India)-Benapole (Bangladesh), Gede (India)-Darshana (Bangladesh), Singhabad (India)-Rohanpur (Bangladesh), Radhikapur (India)-Birol (Bangladesh)."

62. Yogasana is now a sport:
● The Central government has decided to promote yogasana as a competitive sport.
● The National Board of Promotion and Development of Yoga and Naturopathy in 2019 recommended that yogasana be recognised as a competitive sport.
● An exhaustive document containing rules, regulations and syllabus for yogasana competitions had been prepared.
● Implications: State and national and world championships in yogasana are proposed in 2021. A pilot national individual yogasana sports championship (virtual mode) is proposed for February 2021.

63. Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC):
● CERC is a statutory body functioning under Sec 76 of the Electricity Act 2003.
● It was initially constituted under the Electricity Regulatory Commissions Act, 1998 in the year 1998.
● The Commission intends to promote competition, efficiency and economy in bulk power markets, improve the quality of supply, promote investments and advise government on the removal of institutional barriers to bridge the demand supply gap and thus foster the interests of consumers.

64. Asia-Pacific Broadcasting Union (ABU):
● It is a non-profit, non-governmental, non-political, professional association of broadcasting organisations, which assist development of broadcasting in region.
● It was established in 1964, and has Secretariat in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. With over 272 member in 76 countries on four continents, ABU is biggest broadcasting union in the world.
● ABU is also member of the World Broadcasters’ Union.

65. U.K., U.S. in top 5 hirers of IT contract staff:
● The findings of the survey — titled ‘Global Demand for Indian IT Contractors’- have been released.
● The survey was conducted by contractor hiring platform Techfynder.
● The findings are based on responses of 52,000 contractors between January and December.
Key findings:
● The U.K., Ireland, the Netherlands, the U.S. and South Africa are among the top countries attracting and retaining highly-skilled Indian workers in the contracting marketplace.
● Due to the pandemic, many businesses were going online to offer their products and services, which has further raised demand for software engineers, Java developers, cybersecurity engineers, data scientists, web developers and UI/UX designers.

66. Boko Haram:
Boko Haram is a violent Islamist insurgent group that has spread from northeast Nigeria to neighbouring West African nations of Niger, Chad and Cameroon in the Lake Chad Basin.
Why in News?
344 abducted Nigerian boys freed by Boko Haram.
67. All have equal right to practice religion:
Allahabad High Court grants protection to man booked under Uttar Pradesh anti-conversion ordinance.

**Fundamental Rights at stake:**
1. Right to privacy as a basic fundamental right under Article 21 of the Constitution.
2. Article 25 provides that all persons have equal right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion, subject to public order, morality, health and other provisions of Part-III of the Constitution.

68. SolarWinds hack:
- It is a cyberattack recently discovered in the United States.
- It has emerged as one of the biggest ever targeted against the US government, its agencies and several other private companies.

69. Paris fined for appointing ‘too many women’ in senior positions:
- Paris city authorities have been slapped with a €90,000 (over Rs 80 lakh) fine for appointing too many women to top-level positions in 2018 and violating a national rule designed to ensure gender parity in employment.
- Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo — who led the drive to bring more women into the city’s government — has mocked the fine as “unfair”, “irresponsible” and “absurd” during a meeting of the city council.

**What’s the issue? What is the ‘Sauvadet law’?**
In 2018, 11 women and five men were appointed to leadership positions in Paris’ city hall. Since 69 per cent of the appointments went to women, the decision was technically in violation of a law introduced in 2013, known as the ‘Sauvadet law’, which requires a minimum of 40 per cent of appointments for each gender.

70. IND-INDO CORPAT:
- 35th edition of India-Indonesia Coordinated Patrol (IND-INDO CORPAT) held recently.
- Conducted between the navies of India and Indonesia.
- The aim is to ensure the safety and security of shipping and international trade in the region.

71. Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI):
- Launched by Modi in September 2019 at the UN Secretary-General’s Climate Action Summit in New York, US.
- A platform where knowledge is generated and exchanged on different aspects of disaster and climate resilience of infrastructure.
- It will create a mechanism to assist countries to upgrade their capacities and practices, with regard to infrastructure development in accordance with their risk context and economic needs.

72. What is the ‘Christmas Star’ conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter?
After nearly 400 years, Saturn and Jupiter the two largest planets in our solar system will be brought closest in the night sky by an astronomical event called the “great conjunction” and popularly referred to as the “Christmas Star”.

So, what is the “Great Conjunction”?
- A conjunction is not unique to Saturn and Jupiter however, it is the name given to any event where planets or asteroids appear to be very close together in the sky when viewed from the Earth.
- Astronomers use the word “great” for the conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn because of the planets’ sizes.

The “Great Conjunction” happens once in about 20 years because of the time each of the planets take to orbit around the Sun.
73. First rescue and rehabilitation centre for monkeys in Telangana:
- The first rescue and rehabilitation centre for monkeys in the State was inaugurated at Gandi Ramanna Haritavanam near Chincholi village in Nirmal district recently.
- It is the second such facility for the primates in the country (first one is in Himachal Pradesh).
- The monkeys that venture into human habitations would be caught in a phased manner and brought to the rehab centre where they would be operated upon for birth control and would be released into forests against after the rehab period.

74. Himalayan trillium:
- The Himalayan trillium, a common herb of the Himalayas was declared 'endangered' by the IUCN.
- The herb has numerous uses for human beings thus inviting people to utilize it, paving way for overutilization.
- Temperate and sub-alpine zones of the Himalayas at an altitude of 2400 meters to 4000 meters.
- India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, Nepal, Bhutan has been home to this specie.

75. ONGC begins production in Bengal basin, making it India's eighth functional:
- Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Limited has begun crude oil production from the Asokenagar-1 well, Bengal Basin in 24 Paragana district.
- This has made the Bengal basin India's eighth producing basin, joining the ranks of Krishna-Godavari (KG), Mumbai Offshore, Assam Shelf, Rajasthan, Cauvery, Assam-Arakan Fold Belt and Cambay.
- There are 26 sedimentary basins in India, covering a total area of 3.4 million square kilometer. Of these, 16 are onland basins, 7 located both onland and offshore and 3 completely offshore.

76. Shaheen-IX:
- It is a bilateral exercise held between the Pakistan Air Force and the People's Liberation Army Air Force since 2011.

77. "Jal Shakti Abhiyan II: Catch the Rain" awareness campaign:
- Launched by the National Water Mission in collaboration with Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) to promote rainwater harvesting.
- Tagline: "Catch the rain, where it falls, when it falls".

78. Status of Leopards report:
- Released recently by the Environment Ministry.
- Key findings:
  - 60 percent rise in Leopard population across the Country; India now has 12,852 leopards.
  - The States of Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka and Maharashtra recorded the highest leopard estimates at 3,421, 1,783 and 1,690 respectively.
- Leopard:
  - Scientific Name- Pantera pardus.
  - Included in Appendix I of CITES.
  - Listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.
  - Nine subspecies of the leopard have been recognized, and they are distributed across Africa and Asia.

79. Legion of Merit to PM Modi:
- Context:
US President Donald Trump has conferred one of the country’s highest military decoration — The Legion of Merit, Degree Chief Commander — to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with Australian PM Scott Morrison and former Japanese PM Shinzo Abe.

- There have been two Indian recipients of the honour in the past: Field Marshal K M Cariappa in 1950, and Gen S M Srinagesh in 1955.

**Key Points:**
- The award is being given since 1943.
- It is a prestigious award conferred by the President of the United States, typically upon Heads of State or Heads of Government of other countries.

### 80. 'FRUITS' portal for land records launched:

- The 'FRUITS' (Farmer Registration and Unified Beneficiary Information System) portal, a project of e-governance by Karnataka Government.
- The portal was integrated to the Bhoomi portal of the State for fetching and validating land details.
- It will eliminate visit of farmers to sub-registrar offices.

**How it works?**
1. In this portal, all the farmers will be registered and given a FID Number.
2. Using this number, the financial and lending institutions can access the land details of the farmers as well as their borrowings and take a quick decision on lending to the farmers depending on their requirements.
3. All financial institutions would be brought on to the portal so that at one place, all the data pertaining to the loans of the farmers would be available.

### 81. 100% FDI in DTH services:

The Union Cabinet has given its nod to the following changes in Direct-to-Home (DTH) broadcasting services:
1. 100% foreign direct investment (FDI).
2. Licenses will be issued for a period of 20 years, compared to 10 years at the moment, and will be renewed for a 10-year period.
3. The license fee has been revised from 10 per cent of gross revenue (GR) to 8 per cent of adjusted gross revenue (AGR), which will be calculated by deduction of GST from GR.
4. Broadcasting firms will have to pay the license fee on quarterly basis, rather than the annual basis as of now.
5. DTH operators can share infrastructure.

### 82. Merger of four of its film media units:

Cabinet has approved the merger of four of its film media units with the National Film Development Corporation (NFDC) Ltd.
These include:
1. Films Division.
2. Directorate of Film Festivals.
3. National Film Archives of India.
4. Children’s Film Society, India.

**Need for:** There was “duplication” between some of these organisations. After coming together, the governance will become better.
83. **GST: physical verification of premises is now mandatory:**
The government has introduced mandatory physical verification of business premises for the purposes of obtaining GST registration.
- The move is aimed at controlling the menace of GST fake invoice frauds.
- Now there must be in-person verification before registration is granted to an applicant. Further, in case an applicant opts for Aadhaar authentication, he will undergo biometric-based Aadhaar authentication at one of the facilitation Centres notified by the Commissioner.

84. **Medium Range Surface-To-Air Missile:**
**Context:** Successfully test-fired.
- The DRDO has jointly developed the missile in collaboration with Israel Aerospace Industries.
- Manufactured by Bharat Dynamics Ltd.
- The Army variant of the MRSAM system comprises a command post, a multi-function radar and mobile launcher system.

85. **Kilauea volcano:**
- The Kilauea volcano on Hawaii’s Big Island erupted recently. Also called Mount Kilauea, the Volcano is located in Hawaii Volcanoes National Park on the southeastern part of the Island.

86. **What is PASSEX?**
A passing exercise is an exercise done between two navies to ensure that the navies are able to communicate and cooperate in times of war or humanitarian relief. Common drills include flashing light drills, semaphore drills, and flaghoist drills.

87. **What is Visva-Bharati?**
- Visva-Bharati is a public research central university and an Institution of National Importance located in Santiniketan, West Bengal, India.
- It was founded by Rabindranath Tagore who called it Visva-Bharati, which means the communion of the world with India.
- Visva-Bharati was declared to be a central university and an institution of national importance by an Act of Parliament in 1951.

**Why in News?**
Centenary celebrations.

88. **Good governance day:**
Observed annually on December 25.
- The day is also celebrated to commemorate the birth anniversary of India's former Prime Minister, Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- The day aims to let the citizens, the students, who are the future of the country know about the government's responsibilities and duties that it needs to fulfill.
89. Tripura govt's new scheme to offer jobs to next of kin of those lost in political violence:
   - Under the New scheme, the state cabinet has decided to provide government jobs to the next of kin of those who lost their lives in political violence till March 2018.
   - Under the scheme, government jobs will be provided to any one member of such families, provided they meet a set of requisite criteria.

90. ‘BBX11’ gene:
   - It is a gene that facilitates in the greenning of plants by playing a crucial role in regulating the levels of protochlorophyllide — an intermediate in the biosynthesis of the green pigment chlorophyll.
   - Identified recently by Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER).

91. Maharashtra to setup International Sports University:
   - Cabinet has approved a draft bill for the constitution of an international sports university in the state.
   - It will be setup in Pune.
   The university will offer various courses, including physical and sports education, sports science and sports medicine, sports technology, sports governance, sports management, sports media and communication, and sports coaching and training.

92. LAC hotspots turn brand buzzwords in Valley:
   - For a Delhi-based shoe company, volatile locations between India and China across LAC have become money-spinners; a range of winter shoes named after them is flying off the shelves across the Kashmir Valley.
   Key Points include: ‘Galwan’, ‘Doklam’, ‘Kargil’, and ‘Point 5’ among others.  
   (Note: try to locate the above-mentioned points on map and have a brief idea about their surroundings).

93. Portulaca laljii:
   - It is a new species of the wild sun rose discovered recently from the Eastern Ghats in India.
     - Discovered from Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh.
     - It has unique features such as a tuberous root, no hair in its leaf axils, a reddish-pink flower, prolate-shaped fruits, and copper brown seeds without lustre.
     - The succulent nature of tuberous roots allow the plant to survive on rocky crevices.

94. Sahi Fasal Campaign:
   - Launched by National Water Mission in 2019 to nudge farmers in the water stressed areas to grow crops which are not water intensive, but use water very efficiently; and are economically remunerative; are healthy and nutritious; suited to the agro-climatic-hydro characteristics of the area; and are environmentally friendly.
     - Creating awareness among farmers on appropriate crops, micro-irrigation, soil moisture conservation etc; weaning them away from water intensive crops like paddy, sugarcane etc to crops like corn, maize etc which require less water;etc ultimately leading to increase in the income of farmers are the key elements of “Sahi Fasal”.

95. Monpa handmade paper:
   - It is a 1000-year-old heritage art of Arunachal Pradesh.
   - The art of making handmade paper originated among the Monpas over 1000 years ago.
   - Gradually this art became an integral part of local custom and culture of Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh.
- The fine-textured handmade paper, which is called 'Mon Shugu' in the local dialect, is integral to the vibrant culture of the local tribes in Tawang.
- The Monpa handmade paper is made from the bark of a local tree called 'Shugu Sheng', which has medicinal values too.

**Context:**
The KVIC has commissioned a Monpa handmade paper making unit in Tawang which not only aims at reviving the art but also in engaging the local youths with this art professionally so that they can earn from it.

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### 96. 100th Kisan Rail:
- 100th Kisan Rail from Sangola in Maharashtra to Shalimar in West Bengal was recently flagged off.
- The 'Kisan Rail' services initiative will help small and marginal farmers, who are over 80 per cent of the peasantry, in supplying their produce to far-off markets. This will also help boost the income of farmers.
- 100 Kisan Rails were launched in the last 4 months.

### 97. India’s first-ever driverless train:
- PM inaugurates India’s first-ever driverless train operations on Delhi Metro’s Magenta Line.
- These trains are mostly remotely controlled from the command rooms of the DMRC known as Operations Control Centre (OCC), from where teams of engineers track and monitor in real time train movement across the DMRC network.

### 98. Paray Samadhan:
- It is a new grievance redressal mechanism launched recently by West Bengal.
- Paray Samadhan means redressal in the neighbourhood.
- This will not address major infrastructural gaps but will address municipal, local or service gaps through specific mission mode to reach out to the neighbourhood.
- This will be supplementary of ‘Duare Sarkar’.

**Duare Sarkar** is an initiative of the state government, spread over 60 days, for delivery of specific schemes of the state government at the doorsteps of the people through outreach camps organized at the level of gram panchayat and municipal ward level.

### 99. ‘My Stamp’ scheme:
- Run by India Post for personalised sheets of postage stamps.
- Under the scheme, any person may submit soft or hard copies of their photographs or of that of their relatives or friends or any other image including logo, symbols, heritage places or wildlife to get them printed and published on stamps.
- Each stamp sheet would cost the applicant ₹300.

**Why in News?**
Stamps bearing photographs of many antisocial elements were issued under ‘My Stamp’ scheme. Postal Department says it was a mistake and begins enquiry.

### 100. Assam tables Bill to make madrasas regular schools:
- The bill seeks to convert the State-run madrasas into general educational institutes from the next fiscal.
- The Bill proposed to convert the madrasas into upper primary, high and higher secondary schools with no change of status and pay, allowances and service conditions of the teaching and the non-teaching staff.

### 101. Pedalandariki Illu:
The Andhra Pradesh government has launched the housing-sites distribution exercise under the ‘Pedalandariki Illu’ (houses for all the poor) scheme.
- The scheme is expected to provide low-cost housing for an estimated 30.6 lakh people in the state.
102. Govt. mulls mandatory front seat airbags:
- The government has proposed to make airbags mandatory for the passengers in the front seat of a vehicle.
- The step aims to improve passenger safety in case of accidents.
- The Road Transport Ministry has issued a draft notification in this regard.

103. Gaza:
Islamist groups from Gaza fire rockets into sea to mark the anniversary of the start of the 2008 conflict with Israel.

Where is Gaza?
- Gaza is a densely populated strip of land that is mostly surrounded by Israel and peopled almost exclusively by Palestinians. Israel used to have a military presence, but withdrew unilaterally in 2005.
- Gaza is governed by the Islamist group Hamas, which formed in 1987 as a militant “resistance” group against Israel.

104. Giant Rock Bee Honey:
Giant Rock Bee Honey added to Tribes India Collection.
- It is a unique variant of honey, sourced from Malayali Tribes of Tamil Nadu.
- Malayali is a tribal group from the Eastern Ghats in North Tamil Nadu.
- With a population of around 3,58,000, they are the largest Scheduled Tribe in that region.

105. Digital Ocean:
- Launched recently.
- It is the first of its kind digital platform for Ocean Data Management.
- Developed by Indian National Centre for Oceanic Information Services (INCOIS) of MoES.
- It includes a set of applications developed to organize and present heterogeneous oceanographic data by adopting rapid advancements in geospatial technology.
- It facilitates data visualization, data analysis to assess the evolution of oceanographic features, data fusion.

106. Meteorological (Met) Centre at Leh:
- Inaugurated recently.
- Located at a height of 3500m, MetCenterLeh will be the highest meteorological centre in India.
- It will provide forecast for important tourist places like Nubra, Changthang, Pangong Lake, Zanskar, Kargil, Drass, Dha-Baima (Aryan valley), Khalsi among others.

107. Dibru-Saikhowa National Park:
Context:
Assam CM sets Jan. 31 deadline to rehabilitate Dibru-Saikhowa National Park dwellers.

What’s the issue?
It has been hanging fire since 1999, when the Dibru-Saikhowa Wildlife Sanctuary was upgraded to a national park.

About the National Park:
- It is situated in the south bank of the river Brahmaputra in Assam.
- It is the largest swamp forest in north-eastern India.
- It is an identified Important Bird Area (IBA), notified by the Birdlife International.
- It is most famous for the rare white-winged wood ducks as well as feral horses.
- The forest type comprises semi-evergreen forests, deciduous forests, littoral and swamp forests and patches of wet evergreen forests.
- Maguri Motapung wetland is a part of the Reserve.
108. Govt. nod for missions in Estonia, Paraguay and Dominican Republic:
- Government of India to open three missions in Estonia, Paraguay and the Dominican Republic in 2021.
- This will help expand India’s diplomatic footprint, deepen political relations, enable growth of bilateral trade, investment and economic engagements.
(Note: Have a general idea about geographical locations of the above mentioned countries).

109. Akash missile:
Cabinet gives approval for Akash missile export.
- Akash is an indigenously developed and manufactured short-range Surface to Air Missile (SAM) system.
- Range: 25km.
- Can take off at a speed of around 2.5 Mach and reach a high altitude of 18 kms and as low as 30 meters.

Value- additions for Mains:

1. No appetite for paid vaccines, finds rural survey:
The ‘COVID-19 Vaccine and Rural India’ survey was conducted by Gaon Connection, a rural media platform. Key findings:
   1. Less than half (44%) the respondents were willing to pay for vaccination against COVID-19.
   2. 36% said outright that they would not pay for it.
   3. Since affordability is a big issue in rural areas, respondents were asked if they hypothetically had to pay ₹1,000 for two doses of the vaccine, then who would get vaccinated first in their family. To this, more than 33% of the respondents said they would vaccinate their old parents.
   4. 43.5% of those surveyed said vaccines should first be given to doctors and nurses.
   5. More than 51% respondents said the disease was a “conspiracy by China”, 22% believed it was a failure of people to take precautions and 18% believed this was the government’s failure.
   6. COVID-19 has also changed the food habits of rural citizens with almost 70% respondents saying they had stopped eating outside food. Over 33% said they had started eating more vegetables, whereas 30% said they were eating more fruits.

Link:

When things didn’t fall in line even in my third Mains, I emailed InsightsIndia to seek guidance for the next attempt. InsightsIAS Offline program suited all my requirements. Thus, I moved in and stayed nearby Insights institute.

I followed offline prelims test series of Insights and also, prelims cum mains integrated study plan that was given to core batch students. I scheduled my day in accordance with the test series timetable (please make your own timetable which suits you the best). In my timetable I ensured 8 hours of sleep, one hour of sports and 5 minutes break in between. Make a realistic timetable which is practically possible to implement, set achievable targets and be honest to yourself in following it.

I improved immensely by getting the personal feedback by Vinay Sir, and was able to top the UPSC CSE-2016.

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AIR 01, CSE 2016

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