INSTA CURRENT AFFAIRS

NOVEMBER 2021
INSTA CLASSES PLUS

ONLINE & OFFLINE AT DELHI AND BENGALURU

FULL-FLEDGED CLASSROOM COURSE
FOR UPSC CSE 2023
(Integrated Prelims, Mains and Interview Program)

Duration: 19-20 Months

Driven by EQUIP Strategy
A Unique Initiative of InsightsIAS

www.insightsonindia.com
# Table of Contents

## GENERAL STUDIES – 1 .............................. 6

### Topics: Indian culture will cover the salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times. ......................................................... 6

1. Punjab Police want Guru Nanak's birth anniversary to be declared 'World Pedestrian Day':... 6
2. 12-foot statue of Adi Shankaracharya unveiled at Kedarnath: .......................................... 6
3. Kartarpur Corridor: ............................................. 7
4. What is the Puri heritage corridor? .......... 8
5. Alexander and Chandragupta Maurya: ......... 9
7. Ramappa temple: Telangana’s first UNESCO World Heritage Site: .................................. 11

### Topics: Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present significant events, personalities, issues. ................................................. 12

1. Who is warrior woman Onake Obavva?  Context: ................................................................. 12
2. Rani Kamlapati: ................................................. 13
3. Madhya Pradesh tribal outreach programme: 13

### Topics: The Freedom Struggle – its various stages and important contributors/contributions from different parts of the country. .............................................. 14

1. Birsa Munda: ..................................................... 14
2. Who was Rani Gaidinliu? ................................. 15

### Topics: History of the world will include events from 18th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, redrawing of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization, political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.- their forms and effect on the society. ................................................................. 16

1. Atlantic Charter: ................................................. 16

### Topics: Women and women related issues. .......... 16

1. Permanent Commission for Women Officers: .. 16

### Topics: Population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues. ........................... 18

1. Delhi’s Master Plan 2041, its key areas and challenges: ......................................................... 18

### 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. ......................................................... 19

1. What is Leonids Meteor Shower? ................. 19
2. Daylight Saving Time: ...................................... 20

## GENERAL STUDIES – 2 ................................ 22

### Topics: Indian Constitution- historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure; Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries. ... 22

1. Rahul moves HC to quash defamation case:.... 22
2. No consensus on limiting the Speaker’s powers: 23

### Topics: Separation of powers between various organs dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions. ........ 24

1. Mullaperiyar dam issue: .................................... 24
2. Special courts to try MPs: ................................ 25
3. Ordinances to extend the tenures of the directors of CBI and ED: ........................................... 26
4. SC, HCs can’t interfere in daily temple rituals:.. 28
5. Disruptions in Parliament: ............................... 29
6. National Court of Appeal: ............................... 30

### Topics: Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these. .............................................. 31

1. Sessions of Parliament: ................................. 31
2. What is MPLAD Scheme? ............................... 31
3. Privilege motion against Minister: .................. 33
4. Privilege motion against CBI, ED in WB: ........ 34
5. The process for repealing a law: ....................... 35

### Topics: Salient features of the Representation of People’s Act. ................................................ 36

1. Registration of political parties: ..................... 36
2. Will you ban convicts from polls, asks SC: ...... 37

### Topics: Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies. ......................................................... 38

1. Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG): ................................................................. 38
2. Suspension of MPs: ......................................... 39

### Topics: Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies. .................................................. 40

1. Competition Commission of India: .................. 40
2. General consent to CBI: ................................. 42
3. Autonomy of CBI: ............................................ 43

### Topics: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation. .............................. 45

2. Why Tamil Nadu’s DMK govt is opposed to National Education Policy? .............................. 46
3. Haryana private sector quota law to take effect from Jan 15: .................................................... 47
4. Midday meal scheme: ....................................... 48
5. National Register of Citizens (NRC): .............. 49
6. Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN) scheme: ................................................... 50
7. Plea in Supreme Court on new Ordinances: ....... 51

[www.insightsonindia.com](http://www.insightsonindia.com)
Topics: Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes ........................................59
1. SMILE Scheme ........................................59
2. Domestic workers’ survey kicks off ......................................60

Topics: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources ........................................61
1. Dengue fever ........................................61
2. Covaxin gets WHO nod for emergency use ..................62
3. Zika virus ........................................63
4. Norovirus ........................................64
5. World Bank’s STARS project ................................65
6. NFHS Survey ......................................66
7. African swine fever ....................................67
8. Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana: ..........................68
9. Omicron - a new variant ....................................68

Topics: Role of civil services in a democracy .........................70
1. ‘Lateral entry’ into bureaucracy: reason, process, and the controversy ....................................70
2. Authoritarianism is on the rise, says report .....................70

Topics: India and its neighbourhood relations .......................72
1. China-Taiwan relations .....................................72
2. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) ....................72
3. Battle of Rezang La ....................................74
4. Chinese firms eye Afghanistan’s lithium .......................74

Topics: Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests ................................75
1. Istanbul Convention on violence against women ..............75

Topics: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests, Indian diaspora ..............................................76
1. Palestinian PM calls for Indian support ..........................76
2. Hamas and Gaza Strip ....................................78
3. Automatic job authorisation for spouses of H-1B visa holders ............................................79
4. Iran invites the UN nuclear body chief to Tehran for talks ............................................79
5. Iran nuclear talks set to resume after five months ................81
6. Philippines and China- South China Sea Dispute ................81

Topics: Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate ........................................82
1. G20 Summit ...........................................82
2. UNESCO creative cities network (UCCN) .....................84
3. UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA): ................84
4. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) .................85
5. New Pak. law allows Jadhav to file appeal .....................86
6. ASEAN objects as China wants Myanmar junta to join the summit ........................................87
7. ASEAN meet: .........................................88
8. Digital Tax pact: .........................................88
9. OPEC+ move to hit recovery .....................................89
10. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO): ..................90
11. Interpol: ..................................................92

GENERAL STUDIES – 3 ........................................94

Topics: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment ........................................94
1. RBI issues revised PCA framework for banks ...............94
2. What is Input Tax Credit (ITC)? ...............................95
3. New RBI initiatives: ......................................95
4. 10,000 cr. more allotted for MGNREGS .....................96
5. What is a K-shaped economic recovery and what are its implications? ............................98

Topics: Inclusive growth and issues arising from it ..................99
1. RBI panel on ARCs: ......................................99
2. Centre allows seven states to borrow more ...............99
3. Corporates to set up banks- Issues related ..................100

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 ..................................................101
1. Edible oil prices ........................................101
2. What are Landraces? .....................................102

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 .............................................103
1. Rashtriya Gokul Mission: ..................................103
2. Policy on MSP ............................................104

Topics: Food processing and related industries in India scope and significance, location, upstream and downstream requirements, supply chain management .............................................105
1. What is Punjab Land Preservation Act of 1900, how it was tweaked? ........................105
Topics: Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth. .................................................. 105
  1. Centre accepts Cairn’s offer on retrospective tax.................................................. 105

Topics: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc. ........................................... 106
  1. One Sun, One World, One Grid: .................................................. 106
  2. Cabinet nod for mobile services in 7,287 villages: .................................................. 107
  3. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY): .................................................. 108
  4. Green Hydrogen: .................................................. 110
  5. Strategic petroleum reserves (SPR) programme: .................................................. 110
  6. Bharat Gaurav scheme: .................................................. 111

Topics: Investment models ........................................... 112
  1. What are Infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs)? ........................................... 112

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. .......................................................... 113
  1. What are Technical Textiles? .................................................. 113
  2. Iron and enriched uranium: .................................................. 114
  3. What is Cord blood banking? .................................................. 116
  4. What is UV-C technology? .................................................. 117

Topics: Awareness in space ........................................... 117
  1. NASA’s Perseverance rover: .................................................. 117
  2. NASA’s DART mission: .................................................. 118
  3. James Webb Space Telescope: .................................................. 119
  4. Space debris: .................................................. 120
  5. What is PASIPHAE, and why is it important? .................................................. 121

Topics: Awareness in the fields of IT, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights .................................................. 121
  1. RBI governor Shaktikanta Das sounds alarm on cryptocurrencies: .................................................. 121
  2. FSSAI releases draft regulations for GM foods: .................................................. 123
  3. Internet through LEO satellites: .................................................. 124

Topics: Conservation related issues, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment. .................................................. 125
  1. What is the climate vulnerability index released by CEEW? .................................................. 125
  2. India will achieve net zero emissions by 2070: .................................................. 126
  3. COP26 climate conference: .................................................. 127
  4. Feasibility of a blanket ban on firecrackers: .................................................. 128
  5. Bottom trawling and associated issues: .................................................. 129
  6. Ganga Mission in Guinness records: .................................................. 130
  7. Infrastructure for Resilient Island States: .................................................. 131
  8. The ‘Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Rights Act)’: .................................................. 132
  9. Stubble Burning and its impact on health: .................................................. 133
  10. Extinction risk for leopards in North India: .................................................. 134
  11. What is the Global Methane Pledge? .................................................. 135
  12. Climate Change Performance Index: .................................................. 137
  13. What causes frothing in Delhi’s Yamuna? .................................................. 138
  14. Green Bonds: .................................................. 139
  15. Fly Ash: .................................................. 140
  16. National Green Tribunal (NGT): .................................................. 141

Topics: Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security. .................................................. 142
  1. Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA): .................................................. 142

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 .................................................. 144
  1. Cybercrime went up by 500% during pandemic: .................................................. 144
  2. Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019: .................................................. 145
  3. Plea on Hate Speech in Supreme Court: .................................................. 146
  4. RBI panel moots law to regulate digital lending: .................................................. 147

Topics: Security challenges and their management in border areas; linkages of organized crime with terrorism. .................................................. 148
  1. The 2006 Supreme Court ruling on police reforms: .................................................. 148
  2. Drug trafficking in Afghanistan: .................................................. 148

Topics: Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate .................................................. 149
  1. Integrated theatre commands: .................................................. 149

GENERAL STUDIES – 4 .................................................. 151
  1. At COP26, T.N. teenager tells leaders that youth are angry: .................................................. 151

FACTS FOR PRELIMS .................................................. 152
  1. Punjab to conserve Indus river dolphins: .................................................. 152
  2. Strait of Hormuz: .................................................. 152
  3. Rescue guide for Ganges River Dolphin: .................................................. 152
  4. BASIC Countries: .................................................. 152
  5. Anti-terror agency set up in J&K: .................................................. 153
  6. Defence Acquisition Council (DAC): .................................................. 153
  7. Kameng river: .................................................. 153
  8. Who are the Vanniyars? .................................................. 153
  9. Abu Dhabi gives nod to non-Muslim civil marriage: .................................................. 153
  10. Goa Maritime Conclave: .................................................. 154
  11. Yukthadra: .................................................. 154
  12. Islamic State Khorasan Province: .................................................. 154
  13. Diego Garcia: .................................................. 154
<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Global Drug Policy Index:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Pakke tiger reserve:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Delhi Declaration on Afghanistan:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Next COP venues:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Kashi corridor project:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22.</td>
<td>Devasahayam:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23.</td>
<td>Hazaras of Afghanistan:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.</td>
<td>Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25.</td>
<td>Addu Atoll:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26.</td>
<td>SEBI unveils investor charter:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27.</td>
<td>Zircon hypersonic cruise missile:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28.</td>
<td>OP SANKALP:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.</td>
<td>Core Sector Industries:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>Credit default swap:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>National Productivity Council (NPC):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Suez Canal:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Pygmy hogs:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>‘What is El Salvador’s Bitcoin city?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Taiwan Strait:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>‘Bharat Gaurav’ scheme:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Tawang:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Dosti:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>English Channel:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Subansiri Hydroelectric Project (LSHP):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>South Asian University:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Sir Chhotu Ram:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>National Crisis Management Committee:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44.</td>
<td>Gulf Of Aden:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45.</td>
<td>Poshan Gyan:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46.</td>
<td>Hazaras of Afghanistan:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47.</td>
<td>Tiwa tribe and Wanchuwa festival:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GENERAL STUDIES – 1

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

1. Punjab Police want Guru Nanak’s birth anniversary to be declared ‘World Pedestrian Day’:

Context:
Punjab Police has recently proposed that the birth anniversary (Gurpurab) of Sikhism founder Guru Nanak Dev be declared as ‘World Pedestrian Day’.
- A written proposal in this regard may be sent to the Union Ministry of Road Transport and Highways soon.
- This year Guru Nanak’s 552nd Gurpurab will be celebrated on November 19.

Why is Guru Nanak Dev considered the world’s most notable and revered pedestrian?
He travelled far and wide during the 15th and 16th centuries. It is believed that during those times, when early modes of transport were limited and were mostly restricted to boats, animals (horses, mules, camels, bullock carts), Guru Nanak Dev, along with his companion Bhai Mardana, undertook most part of his journeys on foot.

Places visited by Guru Nanak Dev:
From Mecca to Haridwar, from Sylhet to Mount Kailash, Guru Nanak visited hundreds of interfaith sites related to Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Jainism throughout his journeys (also called udaasis).
- At some sites, gurdwaras were constructed to commemorate his visit.
- Later his travels were documented in texts called ‘janamsakhis’.
- These sites are now spread across nine nations as per current geographical divisions — India, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, China (Tibet), Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, and Afghanistan.

Significance of the proposal:
- It will highlight the government’s commitment towards “Right to walk” or pedestrian rights.
- A community which safeguards its pedestrian is treated as developed and contributes to sustainable development goals.
- Besides, on an average, at least a thousand pedestrian deaths are reported in Punjab alone each year. This move ensures their safety.

About Guru Nanak:
- He was born in Talvandi near Lahore.
- The most famous teachings attributed to Guru Nanak are that there is only one God, and that all human beings can have direct access to God with no need of ritual or priests.
- His most radical social teachings denounced the caste system and taught that everyone is equal, regardless of caste or gender.
- He introduced the concept of god- that is ‘Vahiguru’, an entity that is shapeless, timeless, omnipresent and invisible. Other names for God in the Sikh faith are Akaal Purkh and Nirankar.
- Guru Granth Sahib, the holiest book of the Sikhs, contains 974 poetic hymns composed by Guru Nanak.


2. 12-foot statue of Adi Shankaracharya unveiled at Kedarnath:

Context:
www.insightsonindia.com

InsightsIAS
A 12-foot statue of Adi Shankaracharya has been unveiled at Kedarnath, where the acharya is believed to have attained samadhi at the age of 32 in the ninth century.

About Adi Shankaracharya:
- Born in Kaladi village on the bank of the Periyar, the largest river in Kerala.
- He was a disciple of the scholar Govindacharya.
- He was constantly on the move — bearing the flag of Advaita Vedanta, challenging prevailing philosophical traditions including Buddhism and Jainism.
- He is believed to have established the ritual practices at the Badri and Kedardhams.

Literary works:
- Adi Shankara is generally identified as the author of 116 works — among them the celebrated commentaries (bhashyas) on 10 Upanishads, the Brahmasutra and the Gita, and poetic works including Vivekachudamani, Maneesha Panchakam, and Saundaryalahiri.
- He also composed texts like Shankarasmrithi, which seeks to establish the social supremacy of Nambuthiri Brahmins.

What is Advaita Vedanta?
- Advaita Vedanta articulates a philosophical position of radical nondualism, a revisionary worldview which it derives from the ancient Upanishadic texts.
- According to Advaita Vedantins, the Upanishads reveal a fundamental principle of nonduality termed ‘brahman’, which is the reality of all things.
- Advaitins understand brahman as transcending individuality and empirical plurality.
- They seek to establish that the essential core of one’s self (atman) is brahman. The fundamental thrust of Advaita Vedanta is that the atman is pure non-intentional consciousness.
- It is one without a second, nondual, infinite existence, and numerically identical with brahman.

Shankara’s contested legacy:
The essence of Adi Shankara’s philosophy is encapsulated in the much quoted formulation: “brahma satyam jagan-mithya, jivo brahmaiva naaparah” (brahman alone is real, this world is an illusion/ and the jiva is non-differential from brahman).
- Custodians of the caste system cite from Shankara’s commentaries to justify the unequal and unjust social order, whereas others claim these are extrapolations and point to works like Maneesha Panchakam to suggest a different reading of the acharya’s outlook.
- Among the interpreters of his philosophy would be those who suggested that the Advaita Vedanta borrowed the categories of Buddhist thinkers and called him the Prachhanna Buddha (Buddha in disguise), to Sri Narayana Guru who in the 20th century offered a radical reading of Advaita Vedanta to dismantle the theory and praxis of caste.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About Adi Shankaracharya.
2. His literary works.
3. His philosophy.
4. What is Advaita Vedanta?
5. Different schools of philosophy.

Mains Link: Discuss about the legacy of Adi Shankaracharya.

3. Kartarpur Corridor:
Context:
The government is considering reopening the Kartarpur Sahib Gurudwara corridor to Pakistan this week to allow Sikh pilgrims to cross over, more than 20 months after it was shut down due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

- The plan is to open on November 19, the birth anniversary of the Sikh founder Guru Nanak, known as Gurpurab or “Prakash Parv”.

The Kartarpur corridor agreement:

Please note that the Kartarpur corridor agreement allows pilgrims to travel visa free through the corridor.

- Indian pilgrims of all faiths and persons of Indian origin can use the corridor.
- Pilgrims need to carry only a valid passport;
- Persons of Indian Origin need to carry OCI card along with the passport of their country.
- The Corridor is open from dawn to dusk. Pilgrims travelling in the morning will have to return on the same day.

What is the “Kartarpur Corridor” project?
The corridor – often dubbed as the “Road to Peace” – will connect Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan’s Kartarpur with Dera Baba Nanak shrine in India’s Gurdaspur district.

The shrine and its significance:

- The gurdwara in Kartarpur stands on the bank of the Ravi, about 120 km northeast of Lahore.
- It was here that Guru Nanak assembled a Sikh community and lived for 18 years until his death in 1539.
- The shrine is visible from the Indian side, as Pakistani authorities generally trim the elephant grass that would otherwise obstruct the view.
- Indian Sikhs gather in large numbers for darshan from the Indian side, and binoculars are installed at Gurdwara Dera Baba Nanak.

Insta Curious: Did you know that the Punjab Police has recently proposed that the birth anniversary (Gurpurab) of Sikhism founder Guru Nanak Dev be declared as ‘World Pedestrian Day’? Reference: read this.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link: 1. About the corridor. 2. The agreement. 3. About Guru Nanak.

Mains Link: Discuss the significance of Kartarpur Corridor.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GHO96MCC1E.1&imageview=0.

4. What is the Puri heritage corridor?

Context:
Puri heritage corridor is being developed at a cost of Rs 800 crore in Odisha.

What is the Puri heritage corridor project?

- Conceived in 2016, the Project aims to transform the holy town of Puri into an international place of heritage.
- A total of 22 different projects will be executed in a phased manner.
- Funds have been allocated under the state government’s Augmentation of Basic Amenities and Development of Heritage and Architecture at Puri (ABADHA) scheme.
- The project includes redevelopment of Puri lake and Musa river revival plan.

About Puri Jagannath Temple:

www.insightsonindia.com
• It is an important **Vaishnavite temple** dedicated to Jagannath, a form of Sri Krishna in Puri in Odisha.
• The temple is believed to be constructed in the 12th century by **King Anatavarman Chodaganga Deva** of the **Eastern Ganga Dynasty**.
• Jagannath Puri temple is called **‘Yamanika Tirtha’** where, according to the Hindu beliefs, the power of ‘Yama’, the god of death has been nullified in Puri due to the presence of Lord Jagannath.
• This temple was called the **“White Pagoda”** and is a part of Char Dham pilgrimages (Badrinath, Dwaraka, Puri, Rameswaram).
• The Puri temple is famous for its annual **Ratha Yatra**, or chariot festival, in which the three principal deities are pulled on huge and elaborately decorated temple cars.

**Insta Curious:** Did you know that the idol of Jagannatha is made of wood and is ceremoniously replaced in every twelve or nineteen years by using sacred trees?

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. About Puri Jagannath temple.
3. Puri Rath Yatra.

**Mains Link:** Discuss the significance of Puri heritage corridor project.

5. **Alexander and Chandragupta Maurya:**

**Context:**
Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath recently said that Chandragupta Maurya, who founded the Mauryan empire in the 4th century BC, had defeated Alexander of Macedon in battle — and yet, it is the latter whom historians have chosen to call “great”.

**Legacies of Alexander vs Chandragupta:**

**Alexander:**
Alexander was born in 356 BC at Pella in ancient Greece, and succeeded his father, king Phillip II, to the throne at the age of 20.
He came to be called ‘great’ because of his stupendous military conquests.

- He had established, before he turned 30 years of age, **the largest empire the world had seen until then**, which stretched across modern western and central Asia all the way from Greece to India’s northwestern frontier.
- Subsequently, **Ghenghis Khan** (1162-1227) stamped his authority over a bigger swathe of Asia and Europe, and other conquerors such as Tamerlane, Atilla the Hun, and Charlemagne, as well as Ashoka, Akbar, and Aurangzeb built their own very large empires.

**His quest for India:**
- In 327 BC, Alexander crossed the Indus, the farthest frontier of the old Persian empire, and began his Indian campaign that lasted about two years.
- The king of Taxila surrendered to Alexander.
- In the **battle of Hydaspes** that followed, Alexander won against King Porus.
- After the defeat of Porus, Alexander wished to march on into the heartland of the Gangetic basin — but upon reaching the Beas, the last of the five rivers of Punjab, his generals refused to go further.
- Alexander was forced to turn back, and he followed the Indus southward to its delta, where he sent part of his army to Mesopotamia by sea, while leading the other part overland along the Makran coast.

**Legacy:**
His aborted Indian campaign notwithstanding, Alexander is believed to have died undefeated in any battle — seemingly fulfilling the prophecies of the oracles that he would conquer the entire world.

- Alexander had travelled some 1,000 miles from Macedonia, conquering seven nations and, it is said, more than 2,000 cities.
- He hoped to solve the “problem of the ocean” that Greek philosophers had grappled with, reaching the sea, and then sailing to subjugate more new lands.
Chandragupta:
- He was the architect of an empire that controlled the plains of both the Indus and the Ganga, and which stretched until the eastern and western oceans.
- With Pataliputra at its imperial centre, the Mauryan Empire for the first time unified most of South Asia.
- Chandragupta laid the foundations of an extensive and efficient system of centralised administration and tax-collection that formed the bases of his empire.
- Trade and agriculture were reformed and regulated with the building of infrastructure and standardisation of weights and measures, and provisions were made for a large standing army.

Some Greek sources suggest that Chandragupta may have been in communication with Alexander during the latter’s Indian campaign.

Legacy:
Chandragupta overthrew the unpopular last king of the Nandas, Dhana Nanda, and occupied his capital, Pataliputra.
- Guided by the guile and strategy of Kautilya and by his own great military prowess, Chandragupta went about fulfilling his imperial ambitions.
- Once he had established his mastery over the plains of the Ganga, he moved north-west to occupy the power vacuum left by the retreat of Alexander’s army.

The territorial foundation of the Mauryan Empire had been laid, with Chandragupta controlling the Indus and Ganges Plains and the borderlands — a formidable empire by any standards.

Insta Curious:
Did you know that Chandragupta’s political mentor and chief adviser was Chanakya, also known as Kautilya and Vishnugupta, to whom is attributed the legendary Arthashastra, the pioneering Indian treatise on political science, statecraft, military strategy, and economy?

Did you know that in Indian history, the suffix ‘great’ has been used for the emperors Ashoka, Rajaraja and Rajendra Chola, and Akbar, among others?

InstaLinks:
1. About Chandragupta Maurya.
3. Pataliputra.
4. Mauryan Dynasty.
5. Battle of Hydaspes.


6. Guru Nanak Dev Jayanti:

Context:
Guru Nanak Dev Ji Jayanti, also known as Guru Nanak's Prakash Utsav and Guru Nanak Dev Ji Gurpurab, celebrates the birth of the first Sikh guru, Guru Nanak.
- Guru Nanak Jayanti is celebrated on the full moon day of Kartik month, also known as Kartik Poonima.
- This year, followers of Guru Nanak will celebrate the Guru Nanak Jayanti on November 19, 2021.
- It will mark the 552nd birth anniversary of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, the first of the ten Sikh gurus.

About Guru Nanak Dev:
- Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539) was born in a village, Talwandi Rai Bho, near Lahore (it was renamed later as Nankana Sahib).
- He initiated inter-faith dialogue in the 16th century and had conversations with most of the religious denominations of his times.
- His written compositions were included in the Adi Granth compiled by the fifth Sikh Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606).
● It is known as Guru Granth Sahib after the additions made by the 10th guru Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708).

Guru Nanak’s Teachings: Peace and Harmony for all
● Guru Nanak was a great champion of equality. He aimed at creating a casteless society in which there is no hierarchy.
● For him, the differences and multiple identities based on caste, creed, religion and language were irrelevant.
● He had said, “Preposterous is caste, vain the distinction of birth. The Lord gives shelter to all beings”.
● Referring to women, the Guru Nanak says: “How can they be inferior when they give birth to men? Women as well as men share in the grace of God and are equally responsible for their actions to Him.”
● The spirit of living together and harmoniously working together is a consistent thread of thought that runs through Guru Nanak hymns.
● He founded three pillars of Sikhism namely Naam Japna, Kirat Karni, and Vand Chakna.
● He consciously went on long journeys (called uddasian) to far off places along with his two companions Bhai Bala, a Hindu, and Bhai Mardana, a Muslim, to hold dialogues with many saints and Sufis even, some charlatans who claimed some spiritual powers and had some social following.

Significance and relevance of his teachings:
Guru Nanak Dev ji, saint-composer and amongst the great spiritual leaders, his ideas, thoughts and teachings assume far greater relevance today than ever before. They can promote peace, equality and prosperity across the globe.

7. Ramappa temple: Telangana’s first UNESCO World Heritage Site:
Context:
Telangana’s Ramappa Temple is receiving massive focus after it received UNESCO tag recently.

About the Temple:
● Situated in Telangana’s Warangal, the temple stands on a six-feet high star-shaped platform with walls, pillars and ceilings adorned with intricate carvings that attest to the unique skill of the Kakatiyan sculptors.
● The temple is named after its architect, Ramappa.
● Constructed in 1213 AD during the reign of the Kakatiya Empire by Recharla Rudra, a general of Kakatiya king Ganapati Deva.
● The temple’s presiding deity is Ramalingeswara Swamy.

About kakatiya dynasty-Key facts:
The 12th and the 13th centuries saw the emergence of the Kakatiyas. They were at first the feudatories of the Western Chalukyas of Kalyana, ruling over a small territory near Warangal.
● The dynasty saw powerful leaders like Ganapathi Deva and Rudramadevi.
● Prataparudra I, also known as Kakatiya Rudradeva, was the son of the Kakatiya leader Prola II. It was under his rule that the Kakatiyas declared sovereignty. He ruled the kingdom till 1195 A.D.
● It was under the rule of Prataparudra I that usage of Telugu language in inscriptions began.
● Before the establishment of Orugullu/Warangal as the capital, Hanamakonda was the first capital of the Kakatiyas.
● The great Italian traveller Marco Polo visited the Kakatiya Kingdom sometime during Rudramadevi’s tenure as the ruler of the Kakatiya Dynasty and made note of her administrative style; admiring her extensively.

Art and architecture:
● The iconic Kakatiya Thoranam was built by Rudramadevi’s father in the 12th Century. This ornate arch is said to have many similarities with the gateways at the Sanchi Stupa and is also the emblem of Telangana.
● The scenic Pakhal lake in Warangal was built by Ganapathi Deva.
● The 1000 pillar temple in Warangal was built during the Kakatiya Rule and is another example to the exquisite Kakatiya Architecture.
● The Koh-i-Noor Diamond, which is now among the jewels set in the British Crown, was mined and first owned by the Kakatiya Dynasty.

Society:
Under the Kakatiya rule, the caste system was not rigid and in fact, it was not given much significance socially. Anyone could take up any profession and people were not bound to an occupation by birth. The Kakatiya rule finally came to an end in 1323 A.D. when Warangal was conquered by the Ghiyasuddin Tughlaq, the then Sultan of Delhi.

Insta Curious: Do you know the sites that have been delisted from the World Heritage List so far? Read Here.

InstaLinks:
 Prelims Link:
1. About the World Heritage Site.
2. Selection criteria.
3. About WHC.
4. About UNESCO.
5. About ICOMOS.
6. About Ramappa temple.
Mains Link: Discuss the need for recognition of World Heritage sites.

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

1. Who is warrior woman Onake Obavva? Context:
From this year, the Karnataka government has decided to celebrate ‘Onake Obavva Jayanti’ on November 11 throughout the state.

Who is Onake Obavva?
● Onake Obavva is a woman warrior who fought the forces of Hyder Ali single-handedly with a pestle (‘onake’ in Kannada) in Chitradurga in the 18th century.
● She died protecting the Chitradurga Fort, which was ruled by Madakari Nayaka in the 18th century.

Legacy and relevance today:
● Obavva is considered to be the epitome of Kannada pride and celebrated along with other women warriors of Karnataka state.
● Onake Obavva’s courage and quick thinking have been praised by the people of Karnataka, especially in the Chitradurga region, where a stadium is named after her.
● Inspired by Onake Obavva, in 2018, the Chitradurga police started ‘Obava Pade’, a squad of women police constables to protect and educate women in the district. This was later extended to Bangalore.

Insta Curious:
There are many such women warriors from Karnataka. Some of them are Abbakka Rani (first Tuluva Queen of Ullal in coastal Karnataka who fought the Portuguese), Keladi Chennamma (the queen of the Keladi Kingdom who is known for fighting against Mughal emperor Aurangzeb), and Kittur Chennamma (Queen of Kittur known for the 1824 revolt against the British East India Company). Read about them in brief.

2. Rani Kamlapati:

**Context:**
The name of Bhopal’s Habibganj railway station has been changed to Rani Kamlapati station.

- The station has been redeveloped at a cost of around Rs 100 crore with private participation — a first such large-scale PPP model in station redevelopment in India, in the works for the past few years.

**Who was Rani Kamlapati?**

- Rani Kamlapati was the widow of Nizam Shah, whose Gond dynasty ruled the then Ginnorgarh, 55 km from Bhopal, in the 18th century.
- Kampalati is known to have shown great bravery in facing aggressors during her reign after her husband was killed.
- Kamlapati was the “last Hindu queen of Bhopal”, who did great work in the area of water management and set up parks and temples.

**Who are Gonds?**
The Gond are one of the largest tribal communities in India, spread across Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Bihar and Odisha.

**Insta Curious:** Did you know that change of station names is entirely a state subject even though Railways belong to the Union government? But what is the procedure to be followed? Reference: read this.

**InstaLinks:**
**Prelims Link:**
1. Who was Rani Kamlapati?
2. Gond Tribe.
3. Different tribes of India.

**Mains Link:** Write a note on Rani Kamlapati.

**Link:** https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/habibganj-rani-kamlapati-name-change-railway-station-7622433/lite/

3. Madhya Pradesh tribal outreach programme:

**Context:**
Madhya Pradesh government has initiated a massive tribal outreach programme in the state.

- Important tribes in the state include Bhils and Gonds.

As part of the tribal outreach programme, the state has undertaken the following measures:

1. Implementation of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996, which allows self-governance through traditional gram sabhas for people living in scheduled areas.
2. Legalising mohua, a staple drink of the tribals, which will be sold as ‘heritage liquor’.
3. The chief minister has also announced that petty cases registered against tribals will also be withdrawn, most of which are for production and sale of maulua-based liquor.
4. Home delivery of foodgrains distributed under public distribution across all 89 tribal blocks has also been announced.
5. University in Chhindwara to be named after Shankar Shah. Shankar Shah, son of Sumer Shah, was the last ruler of Garha Kingdom under Gond rule.
6. Railway station, bus stop to be renamed after Tantya Bhil, a memorial in his name in Khandwa.
7. A medical college in Mandla will be named after Raja Hirde Shah Lodhi, who had come from Kashi and settled in MP’s Bundelkhand region. His ancestors had established their kingdom in the present-day Damoh which was then under Gond rulers.
9. Raja Sangram Shah award for best work in tribal art and culture. He was the 48th Gond ruler of Garha kingdom.

**Insta Curious:** Did you know that Madhya Pradesh has the largest tribal population of the country, with 46 recognised scheduled tribes, of which three are Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG)?
InstaLinks:
Prelims Link: Briefly study about important tribal leaders and personalities mentioned above.
Mains Link: Who are PVTGs? Why are they classified so? Discuss.
Link: https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/madhya-pradesh-bjp-tribal-outreach-programme-7639670/

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

1. Birsa Munda:
Context:
Birth anniversary of Birsa Munda was observed on November 15th.
- In recognition of his impact on the national movement, the state of Jharkhand was created on his birth anniversary in 2000.

Who was he?
Bisra Munda was a folk hero and a tribal freedom fighter hailing from the Munda tribe. He was a spearhead behind the Millenarian movement that arose in the Bihar and Jharkhand belt in the 19th century under British colonisation. He is also known as ‘Dharti Abba’ or the Earth Father.
- Born on 15th November 1875.

Birsait:
Bisra wanted to reform the tribal society and so, he urged them to let go of beliefs in witchcraft and instead, stressed on the importance of prayer, staying away from alcohol, having faith in God and observing a code of conduct. Based on these, he started the faith of ‘Birsait’.

Achievements:
Bisra started a movement called ‘Ulgulan’, or ‘The Great Tumult’. His struggle against the exploitation and discrimination against tribals led to a big hit against the British government in the form of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act being passed in 1908. The act restricted the passing on of land from the tribal people to non-tribals.

Munda Rebellion:
- It is one of the most important tribal movements.
- It was led by Bisra Munda in the south of Ranchi in 1899-1900.

The movement identified following forces as the cause of the misery the Mundas were suffering:
1. The land policies of the British were destroying their traditional land system.
2. Hindu landlords and moneylenders were taking over their land.
3. Missionaries were criticising their traditional culture.

Significance of Munda Rebellion:
- It forced the colonial government to introduce laws so that the land of the tribals could not be easily taken over by dikus (Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, 1908).
- It showed that the tribal people had the capacity to protest against injustice and express their anger against colonial rule.

Insta Curious: Do you know about the International Day of the World’s Indigenous People? Reference: read this.

www.insightsonindia.com 14 InsightsIAS
InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Where was Birsa Munda born?
2. What is Ulugulan?

Mains Link: Write a note on Birsa Munda and his key contributions to India's freedom struggle.

2. Who was Rani Gaidinliu?

Context:
The ‘Rani Gaidinliu Tribal Freedom Fighters Museum’ is being built in Manipur’s Tamenglong district (Rani Gaidinliu’s birthplace).
- The museum would help preserve and exhibit artefacts related to the tribal freedom fighters, involved in different stages of the fight against the British colonial rule like Anglo-Manipuri War, Kuki-Rebellion, Naga-Raj movements, among others.

Who was Rani Gaidinliu?
- Rani Gaidinliu was a Naga spiritual leader.
- Gaidinliu belonged to the Rongmei clan of the Zeliangrong tribe in the Tamenglong district of western Manipur.
- Born on January 26, 1915.
- At 13, she became associated with freedom fighter and religious leader, Haipou Jadonang, and became his lieutenant in his social, religious and political movement.
- Jadonang, who was also a Rongmei, started the ‘Heraka movement’, based on ancestral Naga religion, and envisioned an independent Naga kingdom (or Naga-Raja).
- Rani Gandiliu’s association with Jadonang prepared her to fight the British. After the execution of Jadonang, she took up the leadership of the movement — which slowly turned political from religious.
- Rani started a serious revolt against the British and was eventually imprisoned for life. She was released after 14 years, in 1947.

Legacy:
Acknowledging her role in the struggle against the British, Jawaharlal Nehru called her the “Daughter of the Hills” and gave her the title “Rani” or queen.
- Rani Gaidilii was one of the few women political leaders who exhibited outstanding courage during the colonial period, despite limitations.
- Unlike Jadonang, whose approach was inclined to be “millenarian”, Rani orchestrated for the need of an armed movement against colonial rule.

Insta Curious: Did you know that in 1938, the Nikhil Manipur Maha Sabha, the first political party of Manipur during the British colonial rule adopted a resolution to free Rani Gaidinliu from prison?

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About Rani Gaidinliu.
2. Haipou Jadonang.
3. Heraka movement.
4. Who gave her title the “Daughter of the Hills”?

Mains Link:
Write a note on the legacy of Rani Gaidinliu.
Topics: History of the world will include events from 18th century such as industrial revolution, world wars, redrawing of national boundaries, colonization, decolonization, political philosophies like communism, capitalism, socialism etc.- their forms and effect on the society.

1. **Atlantic Charter:**

   **Context:**
   U.S. Air Force Brigadier General Robert Spalding has announced the **Digital Atlantic Charter initiative**, a public-private effort focused on safeguarding democracies worldwide.

   **About the initiative:**
   - It is created in the spirit of the Atlantic Charter and following the recent AUKUS trilateral security partnership between Australia, U.K. and the U.S.
   - The initiative supports countries in every region of the world as they work to protect and ensure the resilience of their critical infrastructure.
   - The initiative provides policy advice, an investment vehicle and a technology development platform to help government agencies and commercial entities counter digital authoritarianism.

   **Background:**
   President Joe Biden and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has recently inspected documents related to the **Atlantic Charter**, a declaration signed by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt in August 1941.
   - The two leaders plan to sign what they’re calling a **new Atlantic Charter**, pledging to “defend the principles, values, and institutions of democracy and open societies.”

   **About the Atlantic Charter:**
   The Atlantic Charter was a **joint declaration issued during World War II (1939-45)** by the United States and Great Britain that set out a vision for the postwar world.
   - First announced on August 14, 1941, a group of 26 Allied nations eventually pledged their support by January 1942.
   - Among its major points were a nation’s right to choose its own government, the easing of trade restrictions and a plea for postwar disarmament.
   - The document is considered one of the first key steps toward the establishment of the United Nations in 1945.

   **What Was Included In The Atlantic Charter?**
   The Atlantic Charter included eight common principles. This includes:
   1. The United States and Britain agreed not to seek territorial gains from the war, and they opposed any territorial changes made against the wishes of the people concerned.
   2. To support the restoration of self-government to those nations who had lost it during the war.
   3. People should have the right to choose their own form of government.

   **Insta Curious:** Do you know about the Kellogg-Briand Pact? [Read Here](#) (Read briefly)
   You can make use of this reference for questions related to Peace and International Relations

   **InstaLinks:**
   1. Signatories of Atlantic Charter.
   2. Components.
   3. World War 2- causes and outcomes.
   **Prelims Link:** Discuss the significance of Atlantic Charter.

   **Topics: Women and women related issues.**

1. **Permanent Commission for Women Officers:**

   **Context:**
   After the Supreme Court cautioned the Indian Army of contempt, the Centre has assured the court that it will roll out **Permanent Commission (PC) option to all eligible women Army officers.**
What's the issue?
The Supreme Court in February 2020 directed the government to ensure that women officers in the Army be granted permanent commission (PC) as well as command postings in all services other than combat.

Lt. Col. Nitisha vs. Union of India Case: On 25th March 2021, the Supreme Court held that the Army’s selective evaluation process discriminated against and disproportionately affected women officers seeking permanent commission.

What is a Permanent Commission?
A Permanent Commission means a career in the army till retirement, while Short Service Commission is for 10 years, with the option of either leaving or opting for Permanent Commission at the end of 10 years. If an officer doesn’t get Permanent Commission then, the officer can choose a four-year extension.

Women in Army: Background of the case:
The induction of women officers in the Army started in 1992. They were commissioned for a period of five years in certain chosen streams such as Army Education Corps, Corps of Signals, Intelligence Corps, and Corps of Engineers. Recruits under the Women Special Entry Scheme (WSES) had a shorter pre-commission training period than their male counterparts who were commissioned under the Short Service Commission (SSC) scheme.

- In 2006, the WSES scheme was replaced with the SSC scheme, which was extended to women officers. They were commissioned for a period of 10 years, extendable up to 14 years.
- Serving WSES officers were given the option to move to the new SSC scheme, or to continue under the erstwhile WSES. They were to be however, restricted to roles in streams specified earlier — which excluded combat arms such as infantry and armoured corps.

What was the main issue now?
While male SSC officers could opt for permanent commission at the end of 10 years of service, this option was not available to women officers. They were, thus, kept out of any command appointment, and could not qualify for government pension, which starts only after 20 years of service as an officer.

Why was the government against granting a permanent Commission?
1. Motherhood, childcare, psychological limitations have a bearing on the employment of women officers in the Army.
2. Family separation, career prospects of spouses, education of children, prolonged absence due to pregnancy, motherhood were a greater challenge for women to meet the exigencies of service.
3. Physical limitations: Soldiers will be asked to work in difficult terrains, isolated posts and adverse climate conditions. Officers have to lead from the front. They should be in prime physical condition to undertake combat tasks. The Govt. said women were not fit to serve in ground combat roles.
4. Behavioural and Psychological Challenges: Army units were a “unique all-male environment”. The presence of women officers would require “moderated behaviour”. The male troop predominantly comes from a rural background and may not be in a position to accept commands from a female leader.

Insta Curious: Know about schemes related to women empowerment in India. Reference: read this.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. What is SSC?
2. What is permanent Commission?
3. Article 14 vs 16.
4. Overview of SC judgment.
5. What is WSES?

Mains Link: The Supreme Court’s ruling granting permanent commission to women on a par with men has been hailed as a “great leap” towards equality in the army. Comment.

**Topics: Population and associated issues, poverty and developmental issues.**

1. **Delhi’s Master Plan 2041, its key areas and challenges:**

**Context:**

The Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has extended the ongoing public hearing regarding the draft Master Plan for Delhi 2041 till November 24.

- The Master Plan was put up for public scrutiny in June this year.
- It will take the land-owning agency two or three months after the public hearing concludes to finalise and notify the plan.

**Firstly, what is a master plan?**

A master plan of any city is like a vision document by the planners and the land-owning agency of the city, which gives a direction to the future development. It includes analysis, recommendations, and proposals keeping in mind the population, economy, housing, transportation, community facilities, and land use.

**What is the Master Plan 2041 for Delhi?**

1. It seeks to “foster a sustainable, liveable and vibrant Delhi by 2041”.
2. In the housing sector, it talks about incentivising rented accommodation by inviting private players and government agencies to invest more, keeping in mind the large migrant population.
3. ‘User pays’ principle: To address parking problems, it suggests a ‘user pays’ principle, which means users of all personal motor vehicles, except for non-motorised ones, have to pay for authorised parking facilities, spaces and streets.
4. It aims to minimise vehicular pollution through key strategies, including a switch to greener fuels for public transport and adoption of mixed-use of transit-oriented development (also known as TOD).
5. The draft lays a clear boundary of the buffer zone near the Yamuna river - 300-metre width shall be maintained wherever feasible along the entire edge of the river.

**Changes proposed in the wake of pandemic:**

1. It aims to develop common community spaces to provide refuge spots, common kitchens and quarantine space in an emergency.
2. To improve the nighttime economy, the plan focuses on cultural festivals, bus entertainment, metro, sports facilities, and retail stores included in Delhi Development Authority (DDA)’s Night Life Circuit plan.
3. It also proposes to reduce vulnerability to airborne epidemics through decentralised workspaces, mandatory creation of open areas, better habitat design and green-rated developments to reduce dependence on mechanical ventilation systems.

**Challenges in implementation:**

1. Confrontation from political wings.
2. Lack of resources and funds.
3. Corruption in different departments.
4. Lack of political and bureaucratic will and multiplicity of agencies.

**Insta Curious:**

Do you recollect, the Habitat III conference and the New Urban Agenda? [Read Here](#)

**InstaLinks:**

Prelims Link and Mains Link:

Components and significance of the master plan.
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. What is Leonids Meteor Shower?

Context:
The annual Leonids Meteor Shower has begun. This year’s shower is active between November 6 and 30, with peak activity expected on November 17.

What is Leonids Meteor Shower?
- The debris that forms this meteor shower originates from a small comet called 55P/Tempel-Tuttle in the constellation Leo, which takes 33 years to orbit the sun.
- The Leonids are considered to be a major shower that features the fastest meteors, which typically travel at speeds of 71 km per second.

Meteor Shower vs Storm:
Every 33 years, a Leonid shower turns into a meteor storm, which is when hundreds to thousands of meteors can be seen every hour.
- A meteor storm should have at least 1,000 meteors per hour. In 1966, a Leonid storm offered views of thousands of meteors that fell through the Earth’s atmosphere per minute during a period of 15 minutes.
- The last such storm took place in 2002.

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.

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.

Insta Curious:
Did you know that the light in a Meteor shower—which is why a meteor is called a shooting star—is a result of the friction between the meteorite and the molecules present in the Earth’s atmosphere because of which it burns?

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.

Link:https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/leonids-meteor-shower-explained-7614135/lite/.

2. Daylight Saving Time:
Context:
Daylight saving time was in the news this week as standard time hit the United States this past weekend, forcing people to turn their clocks back and gain an hour of sleep.

What is **Daylight Saving Time**?
Also called **summer time**, it is the system for uniformly advancing clocks, so as to extend daylight hours during conventional waking time in the summer months.
- The practice was **first suggested** in a whimsical essay by Benjamin Franklin in 1784.
- In countries in the Northern Hemisphere, clocks are usually set ahead one hour in late March or in April and are set back one hour in late September or in October.

Objectives for using DST:
- **Achieve energy efficiency**: Increasing focus on energy efficiency due to climate change because of over consumption of energy makes DST relevant. DST is thus an environmentally sustainable concept.
- To ensure that the clocks show a later sunrise and later sunset—in effect ensure a longer evening daytime.
- Completion of routine work an hour earlier.
- DST is meant to save energy.

Issues and concerns associated:
On Agriculture: One reason why farmers oppose DST is that grain is best harvested after dew evaporates, so when field hands arrive and leave earlier in summer, their labor is less valuable. Dairy farmers are concerned because their cows are sensitive to the timing of milking, so delivering milk earlier disrupts their systems.
A spike in workplace injuries: A study of mining injuries across the U.S., found that there was a spike in workplace injuries of nearly 6 percent on the Monday following the shift to daylight saving time.  

On labour and work productivity: Workplace productivity the week after DST drastically decreases. People are tired and lethargic due to a reduction in sleep.

Insta Curious:
Did you know that India does not follow daylight saving time? It is because countries near the Equator do not experience high variations in daytime hours between seasons. Should India have two time zones? Reference: read this.

InstaLinks:  
Prelims Link:  
1. About DST.  
2. Features.  
3. Countries following this.  
4. What is Indian standard time?  

Mains Link: Discuss the significance of DST.
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. Rahul moves HC to quash defamation case:

Context:
Former Congress president Rahul Gandhi has moved the Bombay High Court seeking to quash a defamation case filed by a local BJP leader.

What’s the issue?
The case was filed by Mahesh Shrishrimal before the Girmaon magistrat court in 2018. It states that Mr. Gandhi called Prime Minister Narendra Modi ‘Commander in Thief’. Mr. Shrishrimal felt defamed since he was a member of his party.
- Mr. Gandhi has filed a petition to quash the case on the grounds that in a defamation case the party has to be aggrieved personally and directly.

What is defamation?
Defamation is the communication of a false statement that harms the reputation of an individual person, business, product, group, government, religion, or nation.
In India, defamation can both be a civil wrong and a criminal offence. The difference between the two lies in the objects they seek to achieve.
- A civil wrong tends to provide for a redressal of wrongs by awarding compensation and a criminal law seeks to punish a wrongdoer and send a message to others not to commit such acts.

Legal provisions:
Criminal defamation has been specifically defined as an offence under section 499 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
Civil defamation is based on tort law (an area of law which does not rely on statutes to define wrongs but takes from an ever-increasing body of case laws to define what would constitute a wrong).
- Section 499 states defamation could be through words, spoken or intended to be read, through signs, and also through visible representations.
- Section 499 also cites exceptions. These include “imputation of truth” which is required for the “public good” and thus has to be published, on the public conduct of government officials, the conduct of any person touching any public question and merits of the public performance.

Section 500 of IPC, which is on punishment for defamation, reads, “Whoever defames another shall be punished with simple imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years, or with fine, or with both.”

Misuse of the law and concerns associated:
- The criminal provisions have often been used purely as a means of harassment.
- Given the cumbersome nature of Indian legal procedures, the process itself turns into punishment, regardless of the merits of the case.
- Critics argue that defamation law impinges upon the fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression and that civil defamation is an adequate remedy against such wrongs.
- Criminal defamation has a pernicious effect on society: for instance, the state uses it as a means to coerce the media and political opponents into adopting self-censorship and unwarranted self-restraint.

What has the Supreme Court said?
1. In Subramanian Swamy vs Union of India case 2014, the Court approved the Constitutional validity of sections 499 and 500 (criminal defamation) in the Indian Penal Code, underlining that an individual’s fundamental right to live with dignity and reputation “cannot be ruined solely because another individual can have his freedom”.

www.insightsonindia.com 22 InsightsIAS
2. In August 2016, the court also passed strictures on the then Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa for misusing the criminal defamation law to “suffocate democracy” and, the court said, “public figures must face criticism”.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link: Difference between criminal and civil defamations. Sections 499 and 500 of IPC are related to? What is tort law? Relevant Supreme Court judgments. Exceptions under section 499.

Mains Link: Do you think defamation in India should be decriminalised? Is defamation and contempt law anachronistic? Justify with suitable examples.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G7C96ST7B.1&imageview=0

2. No consensus on limiting the Speaker’s powers:

Context:
The All-India Presiding Officers’ Conference (AIPOC) ended recently with the delegates failing to reach a consensus on whether the Speaker’s powers under the Anti-Defection Law should be limited.

- However, the participants reiterated an earlier resolution that there should be no disruptions during Question Hour and the President’s and Governor’s address to the House.

Recommendations:
C.P. Joshi committee was formed in 2019 to examine the role of the Speaker in cases of disqualification on grounds of defection under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution.

- The committee has advocated that the power to disqualify MPs and MLAs under the anti-defection law should also be given to political parties rather than limiting the power only for Lok Sabha and assembly speakers.

Need for a review:
The political situation when the anti defection law was formed was different and the law needs to be reviewed factoring in the changes in the political situation.

Anti-defection law:
- In 1985 the Tenth Schedule, popularly known as the anti-defection law, was added to the Constitution by the 52nd Amendment Act.
- The purpose of the Amendment was to bring stability to governments by deterring MPs and MLAs from changing their political parties on whose ticket they were elected.
- The penalty for shifting political loyalties is the loss of parliamentary membership and a bar on becoming a minister.

When can a member be disqualified?
If a member of a house belonging to a political party:
1. Voluntarily gives up the membership of his political party, or
2. Votes, or does not vote in the legislature, contrary to the directions of his political party. However, if the member has taken prior permission, or is condoned by the party within 15 days from such voting or abstention, the member shall not be disqualified.
3. If an independent candidate joins a political party after the election.
4. If a nominated member joins a party six months after he becomes a member of the legislature.

However, Legislators may change their party without the risk of disqualification in certain circumstances.

Exceptions:
1. The law allows a party to merge with or into another party provided that at least two-thirds of its legislators are in favour of the merger.
2. On being elected as the presiding officer of the House, if a member, voluntarily gives up the membership of his party or rejoins it after he ceases to hold that office, he won’t be disqualified.
Decision of the Presiding Officer is subject to judicial review:
The law initially stated that the decision of the Presiding Officer is not subject to judicial review. This condition was struck down by the Supreme Court later, thereby allowing appeals against the Presiding Officer’s decision in the High Court and Supreme Court.

- However, it held that **there may not be any judicial intervention until the Presiding Officer gives his order.**

Is there a time limit within which the Presiding Officer should decide?

- There is no time limit as per the law within which the Presiding Officers should decide on a plea for disqualification.

**InstaLinks:**
**Prelims Link:**
1. Names of various committees and commissions with regard to Anti Defection law.
2. Committees vs Commissions.

**Mains Link:** Examine the provisions of Anti-defection law. Has this law largely failed to meet its objective? Discuss.

Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G73970QU8.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G73970QU8.1&imageview=0)

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

1. **Mullaperiyar dam issue:**

**Context:**
The Kerala government has withdrawn its decision granting permission to Tamil Nadu for felling 15 trees downstream the Baby Dam at Mullaperiyar reservoir as part of efforts to strengthen the structure. The state government said that action will be taken against the officials who had sanctioned the move.

**The present issue:**
Please note that both the states are at loggerheads over the stability of the structure, with Kerala demanding that a new dam must be constructed and Tamil Nadu saying that a new structure is not needed. Also, Kerala has been against increasing water levels at the dam, citing structural stability.

**Background:**
**Last month**, the Supreme Court directed the Supervisory Committee to take an immediate and firm decision on the maximum water level that can be maintained at Mullaperiyar dam, amid torrential rain in Kerala.

- The SC constituted a permanent Supervisory Committee in 2014 to oversee all the issues concerning Mullaperiyar dam. The dam is a source of friction between Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

**Issue surrounding water level at the reservoir?**

- Kerala said the water level should not go above 139 feet, the same as what the court had ordered on
August 24, 2018, when the State was hit by floods. It is because the lives of 50 lakh people would be in danger if the water level in the dam is raised.

- However, Tamil Nadu objected to this decision citing the Supreme Court judgments of 2006 and 2014, which fixed the maximum water level at 142 feet.

**Mullaperiyar Dam - what you need to know?**

Although the **dam is located in Kerala**, it is **operated by Tamil Nadu** following an 1886 lease indenture for 999 years (the Periyar Lake Lease Agreement) that was signed between the Maharaja of Travancore and the Secretary of State for India for the Periyar Irrigation works.

- Constructed between 1887 and 1895, the dam redirected the river to flow towards the Bay of Bengal, instead of the Arabian Sea and provide water to the arid rain region of Madurai in Madras Presidency.
- The dam is located on the confluence of the Mullayar and Periyar rivers in Kerala’s Idukki district.

**What does Tamil Nadu say?**

Tamil Nadu claims that although it has undertaken measures to strengthen the dam, the Kerala government has blocked any attempt to raise the reservoir water level – resulting in losses for Madurai farmers.

**Kerala’s arguments:**

Kerala, however, highlights fears of devastation by residents living downstream in the earthquake-prone district of Idukki. Scientists have argued that if there is an earthquake in the region measuring above six on the Richter scale, the lives of over three million people will come under grave danger.

**Insta Curious:**

**What is the rule curve?**

The ‘rule curve’ in a dam decides the fluctuating storage levels in a reservoir. The gate opening schedule of a dam is based on the ‘rule curve’. It is part of the “core safety” mechanism in a dam.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**

1. Locations of Mullayar and Periyar rivers.
2. Location of Mullaperiyar dam?
3. Who manages the dam?
4. About the 1886 Periyar Lake Lease Agreement.
5. About the Interstate River Water Disputes Act, 1956 (IRWD Act).

**Mains Link:** Examine why the Mullaperiyar dam issue has become bone of contention between Tamil Nadu and Kerala. Examine if the union government can help resolve this issue.

Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G4H94B3FL.1&Imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G4H94B3FL.1&Imageview=0).

---

### 2. Special courts to try MPs:

**Context:**

The Supreme Court has decided to examine questions regarding the legal jurisdiction of the special courts set up to exclusively prosecute Members of Parliament and State Legislative Assemblies for various offences.

**Why do we need special courts?**

1. There are more than 4000 cases pending against legislators across the country. Of this, the number of cases against sitting Members of Parliament and members of State legislatures was 2,556.
2. The cases against the legislators include that of corruption, money laundering, damage to public property, defamation and cheating.
3. A large number of cases were for violation of Section 188 IPC for wilful disobedience and obstruction of orders promulgated by public servants.
4. A large number of cases were pending at the appearance stage and even non-bailable warrants (NBWs) issued by courts have not been executed.
5. Besides, in Bihar, 89% Assembly constituencies have three or more candidates who have declared criminal cases against themselves in their affidavits for the ongoing elections.

**Madras High Court observations:**

A three-judge committee of the Madras High Court, in November 2020, questioned the constitutional validity of setting up special courts to exclusively try MPs and MLAs for various crimes.

**Why should separate courts not be set up according to the High Court?**

- Courts should be “offence-centric” and not “offender-centric.”
- Special courts can only be constituted by a statute and not by executive or judicial fiats.

**Why do these observations seem significant?**

Timing of the report: The HC committee report comes in the face of a [2017 Supreme Court order](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GHO96M851.1&imageview=0) authorising the Centre to set up 12 special courts to exclusively try criminal politicians across the country. It also comes at a time when a three-judge Bench of the apex court is looking at ways to expedite these trials pending for years, in some cases, for decades.

**What are the issues associated with the special courts?**

Special courts deprive the accused of their right to a rung of appeal. If the case of an MLA or MP whose offence can be tried by a magistrate is directly placed before a special court, the accused would lose his right to defend his case before a magistrate and also is stripped of his right to make his first appeal before a sessions court.

**What is the way out?**

1. Political parties should themselves refuse tickets to the tainted.
2. The [RP Act](https://www.insightsonindia.com) should be amended to debar persons against whom cases of a heinous nature are pending from contesting elections.
3. [Fast-track courts](https://www.insightsonindia.com) should decide the cases of tainted legislators quickly.
4. Bring greater transparency in campaign financing.
5. The [Election Commission of India (ECI)](https://www.insightsonindia.com) should have the power to audit the financial accounts of political parties.

**Insta Curious:** What is Section 188 of the CrPC? Why is it imposed? Reference: read [this](https://www.insightsonindia.com).

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**

1. Section 8 of the RP Act.
2. SC guidelines.
3. ECI-composition and functions.
4. Powers of Election Commission on matters related to election of candidates.

**Mains Link:**

Discuss the concerns associated with criminalisation of politics and what the Supreme Court has done to address these concerns?

Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GHO96M851.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GHO96M851.1&imageview=0)

**3. Ordinances to extend the tenures of the directors of CBI and ED:**

**Context:**

President Ram Nath Kovind has promulgated two ordinances that would allow the Centre to extend the tenures of the directors of the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Enforcement Directorate from two years to up to five years.

- Currently, the tenure of chiefs of ED and CBI is two years.

**Laws amended:**
1. The change in tenure of the CBI Director was done by amending the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946.
2. On the other hand, the changes to the tenure of the ED Director was brought in by amending the Central Vigilance Commission Act, 2003.

Amendments to the Fundamental Rules, 1922:
The Personnel Ministry has issued an order to amend the Fundamental Rules, 1922 adding the two posts to the list whose services can be extended by up to two years beyond the two-year fixed tenure in “public interest”.
- The previous list comprised Defence Secretary, Foreign Secretary, Home Secretary, Director, Intelligence Bureau and Secretary, Research and Analysis Wing.

About the CBI Director and his appointment:
- The Director of the CBI is appointed as per section 4A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act of 1946.
- The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act (2013) says that the Central Government shall appoint the Director of CBI on the recommendation of a three-member committee consisting of the Prime Minister as Chairperson, the Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha and the Chief Justice of India or Judge of the Supreme Court nominated by him.
- Further, the Delhi Special Police Establishment (Amendment) Act, 2014 made a change in the composition of the committee related to the appointment of the Director of C.B.I. It states that where there is no recognized leader of opposition in the Lok Sabha, then the leader of the single largest opposition party in the Lok Sabha would be a member of that committee.

About Enforcement Directorate:
1. The origin of this Directorate goes back to 1st May, 1956, when an ‘Enforcement Unit’ was formed, in the Department of Economic Affairs, for handling Exchange Control Laws violations under Foreign Exchange Regulation Act, 1947 (FERA ‘47).
2. In the year 1957, this Unit was renamed as ‘Enforcement Directorate’.
3. Presently, it is part of the Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance.
4. The Organization is mandated with the task of enforcing the provisions of two special fiscal laws – Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA) and Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA).

Composition:
Besides directly recruiting personnel, the Directorate also draws officers from different Investigating Agencies, viz., Customs & Central Excise, Income Tax, Police, etc. on deputation.

Insta curious:
1. Details of the Supreme Court verdict in Prakash Singh case and further orders:
2. Has the CBI lost its autonomy?

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. The establishment of the CBI was recommended by?
2. The CBI comes under the administrative control of?
3. Is it a statutory body?
4. Committee to select the director of CBI.
5. Vineet Narain's judgment is related to?
6. Prakash Singh Case verdict- overview.

Mains Link:
Why do you think an officer to be appointed as the CBI Director should have a minimum of six months tenure? Discuss.

4. SC, HCs can’t interfere in daily temple rituals:

Context:
A **writ petition** was filed in the Supreme Court alleging that rituals were not being performed as per traditions at the famous Tirumala Tirupati temple.

Supreme Court’s observations:
- Constitutional courts could not interfere with day-to-day **rituals and sevas** performed in temples on the basis of “public interest” petitions.
- Religious scholars and priests were best equipped to go into the question whether rituals in a temple were being conducted in accordance with customs and traditions.
- In such matters, the writ jurisdiction of a constitutional court under **Articles 226 and 32** was limited.

What is Article 32?
Article 32 deals with the ‘Right to Constitutional Remedies’, or affirms the right to **move the Supreme Court by appropriate proceedings for the enforcement of the rights conferred in Part III of the Constitution**.
- It states that the Supreme Court “shall have power to issue orders or writs, including writs in the nature of habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, quo warranto and certiorari, whichever may be appropriate, for the enforcement of any of the rights conferred by this Part”.

Key Points:
- The right guaranteed by this Article “shall not be suspended except as otherwise provided for by this Constitution”.
- Only if any of these fundamental rights is violated can a person can approach the Supreme Court directly under Article 32.

Can High Courts be approached in cases of violation of fundamental rights?
In civil or criminal matters, the first remedy available to an aggrieved person is that of trial courts, followed by an appeal in the High Court and then the Supreme Court.
When it comes to violation of fundamental rights, an individual can approach the **High Court under Article 226 or the Supreme Court directly under Article 32**.
- Article 226, however, is not a fundamental right like Article 32.

What have been the Supreme Court’s recent observations on Article 32?
In **Romesh Thappar vs State of Madras (1950)**, the Supreme Court observed that Article 32 provides a “guaranteed” remedy for the enforcement of fundamental rights.
- This Court is thus constituted the protector and guarantor of fundamental rights, and it cannot, consistently with the responsibility so laid upon it, refuse to entertain applications seeking protection against infringements of such rights,” the court observed.
During the **Emergency**, in **Additional District Magistrate, Jabalpur vs S S Shukla (1976)**, the Supreme Court had said that the citizen loses his right to approach the court under Article 32.

Finally, Constitutional experts say that it is **eventually at the discretion of the Supreme Court and each individual judge to decide whether an intervention is warranted in a case**, which could also be heard by the High Court first.
InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Types of Writs.
2. Writs jurisdiction of the Supreme Court vs High Courts.
3. About Articles 226 and 32.
4. Who can approach the Supreme Court under Article 32?

Mains Link: Discuss the significance of Article 32 of the Indian Constitution.


5. Disruptions in Parliament:

Context:
Floor leaders of the Rajya Sabha have expressed concern over the Chief Justice of India’s recent remarks on disruptions in Parliament.
- The floor leaders said it is for the Presiding Officers to take appropriate action if the norms of functioning are being violated in the legislatures, and other constitutional agencies should not comment adversely.

What's the issue?
Chief Justice N.V. Ramana recently complained about a lack of debate in Parliament. He said it is a “sorry state of affairs” and that absence of quality debate leaves many aspects of the laws unclear, increasing the burden on the court.

What next?
Such comments should be viewed in the context of the functioning of legislatures marked by persistent disruptions, unruly behaviour and violent actions which have deleterious effects.
- The best way to counter them is to ensure proper functioning of the legislatures by ensuring their dignity and decorum since such comments are finding resonance with the public from what they see about the functioning of the legislatures.

What's the main concern now?
Disruption is replacing discussion as the foundation of our legislative functioning.
- A PRS (PRS Legislative Research) report says during the 15th Lok Sabha (2009-14), frequent disruptions of Parliamentary proceedings have resulted in the Lok Sabha working for 61% and Rajya Sabha for 66% of its scheduled time.
- Another PRS report said, the 16th Lok Sabha (2014-19) lost 16% of its scheduled time to disruptions, better than the 15th Lok Sabha (37%), but worse than the 14th Lok Sabha (13%).
- The Rajya Sabha lost 36% of its scheduled time. In the 15th and 14th Lok Sabhas, it had lost 32% and 14% of its scheduled time respectively.

Reasons for Disruption:
1. Discussion on Matters of Controversy and Public Importance.
3. Lack of Dedicated Time for Unlisted Discussion.
4. Scarce Resort to Disciplinary Powers.
5. Party Politics.

What needs to be done?
- To curb disorder in Parliament there is a need for strict enforcement of code of conduct for MPs and MLAs.
- The Chairperson should suspend MPs not following such codes and obstructing the Houses’ business.
- The government of the day needs to be more democratic and allow the opposition to put their ideas in free manner.
A “Productivity Meter” could be created which would take into consideration the number of hours that were wasted on disruptions and adjournments and monitor the productivity of the day-to-day working of both Houses of Parliament.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
2. Who summons the sessions?
3. Roles and powers of Speaker of Lok Sabha during a session.
5. Articles 74 and 75 of the Constitution.

**Mains Link:**
Highlight the issues associated with frequent disruptions of Parliament. Suggest measures to ensure smooth functioning of the Parliament.

Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GN6982QH3.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GN6982QH3.1&imageview=0).

6. **National Court of Appeal:**

**Context:**
The Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana has urged the Government to seriously consider Attorney General K.K. Venugopal’s suggestion to restructure the judiciary to include **four National Courts of Appeals.**

- He remarked that the judicial structure has remained stagnant since Independence and with four appellate courts, pendency will be remarkably reduced.

**About the National Court of Appeal:**
The National Court Appeal with regional benches in Chennai, Mumbai and Kolkata is meant to act as final court of justice in dealing with appeals from the decisions of the High Courts and tribunals within their region in civil, criminal, labour and revenue matters.

- In such a scenario, a much-relieved Supreme Court of India situated in Delhi would only hear matters of constitutional law and public law.

**Why NCA is a good idea?**
1. A National Court of Appeals makes sense, with the Supreme Court being burdened with cases of all kinds.
2. It will make geographical sense to have different benches to hear appeals. As of now, all appeals have to be heard in New Delhi, inconvenient for cases originating in other parts of the country.
3. A court of appeal can work as an excellent mechanism to sieve cases. If there are areas of law that are particularly unsettled and need clarification, the court of appeal can club them together and send these forward to the Supreme Court. Not only can a number of individual cases be disposed of but areas of law can also be settled and a clear precedent set.
4. If the Supreme Court only deals with crucial cases, the process will become streamlined and will save a lot of time and expense, for both litigants and the courts.

**Why is it a bad idea- arguments against?**
1. It will not reduce the litigation. Apex courts are not clogged but subordinate courts are.
2. It will merely add another layer of adjudication.
3. It is constitutionally impossible because hearing of appeals is a basic structure (which will be affected).
4. It would be a boon only for advocates.
5. This suggestion would require an amendment in **Article 130 of the Constitution** which is impermissible as this would change the constitution of the Supreme Court completely.
7. NCA will add one more level of adjudication and will not help decrease litigation. It will only end up being a boon to advocates. It will mean more hardship to the litigant.

**What else can be done?**
- Efforts should be to strengthen subordinate judiciary (high courts) so that proper justice can be dispensed with.
● The Supreme Court should discourage the usage of the High Court as a mere stepping-stone towards the end of judicial hierarchy.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GIK986B6F.1&imageview=0.

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

1. **Sessions of Parliament:**

   **Context:**
   The [Cabinet Committee on Parliament Affairs (CCPA)] has recommended that the Winter [session of Parliament be held] from November 29 to December 23.

   ● Last year, the winter session could not be held due to the onslaught of the pandemic, which had witnessed the curtailment of the Budget and the Monsoon sessions.

   **What the Constitution says on Parliamentary Sessions?**
   ● Article 85 requires that there should not be a gap of more than six months between two sessions of Parliament.
   ● Please note, the Constitution does not specify when or for how many days Parliament should meet.
   ● The maximum gap between two sessions of Parliament cannot be more than six months. That means the Parliament should meet at least twice a year.
   ● A ‘session’ of Parliament is the period between the first sitting of a House and its prorogation.

   **Who shall convene a session?**
   ● In practice, the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs, comprising senior ministers, decides on the dates for parliament’s sitting and it is then conveyed to the president.
   ● So, the executive, headed by the prime minister, which steers the business to be taken up by parliament will have the power to advise the president to summon the legislature.

   **Why is a Parliamentary Session important?**
   1. Law-making is dependent on when Parliament meets.
   2. Also, a thorough scrutiny of the government’s functioning and deliberation on national issues can only take place when the two Houses are in session.
   3. Predictability in the functioning of Parliament is key to a well-functioning democracy.

   **Insta Curious:** Do you know the difference in powers of Speaker and Chairman with regards to suspension of Members of the House? [Read Here]

   **InstaLinks:**
   - Prelims Link:
     1. Who can Summon the Parliament?
     2. Article 85.
     4. For how many days in a year the Parliament has to meet?
   - Mains Link:
     5. Who chairs the joint sitting of the Parliament?

2. **What is MPLAD Scheme?**

   **Context:**
   Citing economic recovery, the Union Cabinet has restored the Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS) that was suspended in April 2020 subsuming the funds for the scheme in the consolidated fund of India. However, the MPs will get ₹2 crore instead of the annual approved ₹5 crore.

   **Background:**
The government had in April, 2020 decided not to operate MPLADS for the Financial Years 2020-21 and 2021-22; and place the MPLADS funds for these two-years at the disposal of the Ministry of Finance to meet the emergent needs of people.

- From ₹5,012 crore spent during 2018-19, an expenditure of just ₹2,491.45 crore was taken up under the scheme in 2019-20.

How was this fund utilised?
The government has said that the funds saved from the MPLAD Scheme have been utilised to enhance the allocation of funds for improving health infrastructure, provide free ration under PM Garib Kalyan Yojana, and free vaccination for the people.

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 MPLADS 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.

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:
Prelims Link:
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?

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=GN9964IMD.1&imageview=0.
3. **Privilege motion against Minister:**

**Context:**
Congress chief whip in the Rajya Sabha Jairam Ramesh has moved a privilege motion against Culture Minister G. Kishan Reddy over the appointment of former MP Tarun Vijay as the Chairperson of the National Monuments Authority, a post for which, Mr. Ramesh said, Mr. Vijay was not qualified.

**What’s the issue?**
The Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Sites and Remains (Amendment and Validation) Act, 2010 says that the Chairperson of the NMA should have “proven experience and expertise in the field of archaeology, country and town planning, architecture, heritage, conservation architecture or law.”
- However, the Government had appointed a chairperson whose educational and professional background does not meet the requirements of a law passed by Parliament in March 2010.

**What are Parliamentary Privileges?**
Parliamentary Privileges are certain rights and immunities enjoyed by members of Parliament, individually and collectively, so that they can “effectively discharge their functions”.
1. **Article 105 of the Constitution expressly mentions two privileges**, that is, freedom of speech in Parliament and right of publication of its proceedings.
2. **Apart from the privileges as specified in the Constitution**, the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, provides for freedom from arrest and detention of members under civil process during the continuance of the meeting of the House or of a committee thereof and forty days before its commencement and forty days after its conclusion.

**Motion against breaches:**
When any of these rights and immunities are disregarded, the offence is called a breach of privilege and is punishable under law of Parliament.
- A notice is moved in the form of a motion by any member of either House against those being held guilty of breach of privilege.

**Role of the Speaker/Rajya Sabha (RS) Chairperson:**
The Speaker/RS chairperson is the first level of scrutiny of a privilege motion.
The Speaker/Chair can decide on the privilege motion himself or herself or refer it to the privileges committee of Parliament.
- If the Speaker/Chair gives consent under relevant rules, the member concerned is given an opportunity to make a short statement.

**Applicability:**
1. The Constitution also *extends* the parliamentary privileges to those persons who are entitled to speak and take part in the proceedings of a House of Parliament or any of its committees. These include the Attorney General of India.
2. The parliamentary privileges *do not extend* to the President who is also an integral part of the Parliament. Article 361 of the Constitution provides for privileges for the President.

**Insta Curious:**
Are these Parliamentary Privileges defined under law? [Read Here.](#)
Mains Link:
What do you understand by legislative privileges? Discuss the problem of legislative privileges as seen in India time to time.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G379684NP.1&imageview=0

4. Privilege motion against CBI, ED in WB:

Context:
The Trinamool Congress has moved a breach of privilege motion in the West Bengal Assembly against the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and the Enforcement Directorate (ED).

What's the issue?
It was moved for not taking the sanction of the Speaker before filing the chargesheet in the Narada case.
- The Central investigating agencies had filed the chargesheet against three members of the Assembly.

Need for Consent from the Speaker:
The matter was listed before the Calcutta High Court. The Calcutta High Court then gave a clear instruction to the CBI to take the consent from the speaker. However, the CBI went directly to the governor for his consent.

What are Privileges?
Privileges are certain rights and immunities enjoyed by members of Parliament/MLAs individually and collectively, so that they can “effectively discharge their functions”.

1. Article 105 (Article 194 for State Assemblies) of the Constitution expressly mentions two privileges, that is, freedom of speech in Parliament and right of publication of its proceedings.

2. Apart from the privileges as specified in the Constitution, the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, provides for freedom from arrest and detention of members under civil process during the continuance of the meeting of the House or of a committee thereof and forty days before its commencement and forty days after its conclusion.

Motion against breaches:
When any of these rights and immunities are disregarded, the offence is called a breach of privilege and is punishable under law of Parliament.
- A notice is moved in the form of a motion by any member of either House against those being held guilty of breach of privilege.

Role of the Speaker/Rajya Sabha (RS) Chairperson:
The Speaker/RS chairperson is the first level of scrutiny of a privilege motion. The Speaker/Chair can decide on the privilege motion himself or herself or refer it to the privileges committee of Parliament.
- If the Speaker/Chair gives consent under relevant rules, the member concerned is given an opportunity to make a short statement.

Applicability:
1. The Constitution also extends the parliamentary privileges to those persons who are entitled to speak and take part in the proceedings of a House of Parliament or any of its committees. These include the Attorney General of India.

2. The parliamentary privileges do not extend to the President who is also an integral part of the Parliament. Article 361 of the Constitution provides for privileges for the President.

Insta Curious: Are these Parliamentary Privileges defined under law? Read Here.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
www.insightsonindia.com
1. Which provisions of the Constitution protect the privileges of the legislature?
2. What is the procedure to be followed in cases of alleged breach of the legislature’s privilege?
4. What is the punishment for an individual who is found guilty of breaching the legislature’s privilege?
5. Can the Courts intervene in matters involving breach of privileges of state legislatures?

Mains Link:
What do you understand by legislative privileges? Discuss the problem of legislative privileges as seen in India time to time.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G7C96SV00.1&imageview=0

5. The process for **repealing a law**:

Context:
Prime Minister Narendra Modi in his address to the nation on November 19 announced the **repeal of three contentious farm laws**.

He assured farmer groups protesting against these laws that the legislative process for the repeal would be completed in the upcoming Winter Session of the Parliament.

What were the **farm laws** that have been repealed?

They are:
1. **The Farmers Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, 2020**, which is aimed at allowing trade in agricultural produce outside the existing APMC (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) mandis;
2. The **Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, 2020**, which seeks to provide a framework for contract farming;
3. The **Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act, 2020**, which is aimed at removing commodities such as cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onion and potato from the list of essential commodities.

What does it mean for a law to be repealed?

- Repealing a law is one of the ways to **nullify a law**. A law is reversed when Parliament thinks there is no longer a need for the law to exist.
- Legislation can also have a “**sunset**” clause, a particular date after which they cease to exist.

How can the government repeal a law?

The government can **repeal the laws in two ways** — it can either **bring a Bill to repeal the three laws** or **promulgate an ordinance** that will have to be subsequently replaced with a Bill within six months.

- For repeal, the **power of Parliament is the same as enacting a law** under the Constitution.
- **Article 245 of the Constitution** which gives Parliament the power to make laws also gives the legislative body the power to repeal them through the Repealing and Amending Act.
- The Act was first passed in 1950 when 72 Acts were repealed.
- A law can be repealed either in its entirety, in part, or even just to the extent that it is in contravention of other laws.

What is the process for repealing a law?

Laws can be repealed in two ways — either through an ordinance, or through legislation.

- **In case an ordinance is used**, it would need to be replaced by a law passed by Parliament within six months.
- If the ordinance lapses because it is not approved by Parliament, the repealed law can be revived.

The government can also **bring legislation to repeal the farm laws**.

- It will have to be **passed by both Houses of Parliament**, and **receive the President’s assent** before it comes into effect.
- All three farm laws can be repealed through a single legislation.
- Usually, Bills titled Repealing and Amendment are introduced for this purpose.

[www.insightsonindia.com](http://www.insightsonindia.com)
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 Abhiyaan ensure better price realization for farmers? Elucidate.

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

1. Registration of political parties:
Context:
The Election Commission has received an application from Captain Amarinder Singh for registration of his new political outfit called Punjab Lok Congress Party under section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

What next?
According to the Election Commission, any party seeking registration under the Election Commission has to submit an application to it within a period of 30 days following the date of its formation.
This is in keeping with the guidelines prescribed by the Commission in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 324 of the Constitution and Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Registration of political parties:
Registration of Political parties is governed by the provisions of Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

- A party seeking registration under the said Section with the Election Commission has to submit an application to the Commission within the said period following the date of its formation as per guidelines prescribed by the Election Commission of India in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 324 of the Commission of India and Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Guidelines:
1. As per the existing guidelines, the applicant is asked to publish the proposed name of the party in two national newspapers and two local dailies.
2. It should also provide two days for submitting objections, if any, with regard to the proposed registration of the party before the Commission within 30 days from the publication.
3. The notice for publication is also displayed on the website of the Election Commission.

To be eligible for a ‘National Political Party of India:
1. It secures at least six percent of the valid votes polled in any four or more states, at a general election to the House of the People or, to the State Legislative Assembly.
2. In addition, it wins at least four seats in the House of the People from any State or States.
3. It wins at least two percent seats in the House of the People (i.e., 11 seats in the existing House having 543 members), and these members are elected from at least three different States.

To be eligible for a ‘State Political Party:
1. It secures at least six percent of the valid votes polled in the State at a general election, either to the House of the People or to the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned
2. In addition, it won at least two seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State concerned.
3. It wins at least three percent (3%) of the total number of seats in the Legislative Assembly of the State, or at least three seats in the Assembly, whichever is more.
Benefits:
1. If a party is recognised as a State Party’, it is entitled for exclusive allotment of its reserved symbol to the candidates set up by it in the State in which it is so recognised, and if a party is recognised as a ‘National Party’ it is entitled for exclusive allotment of its reserved symbol to the candidates set up by it throughout India.
2. Recognised ‘State’ and ‘National’ parties need only one proposer for filing the nomination and are also entitled for two sets of electoral rolls free of cost at the time of revision of rolls and their candidates get one copy of electoral roll free of cost during General Elections.
3. They also get broadcast/telecast facilities over Akashvani/Doordarshan during general elections.
4. The travel expenses of star campaigners are not to be accounted for in the election expense accounts of candidates of their party.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Registration of Political Parties.
2. Recognised vs Unrecognised political parties.
5. Who is a star campaigner?
6. Article 324 of the Indian Constitution.
7. Section 29A of RPA 1951.

2. Will you ban convicts from polls, asks SC:
Context:
The Supreme Court has asked the Centre whether it was “willing” to favour a lifetime ban on contesting elections for people convicted of offences.

What's the issue?
A petition has been filed in the court urging the need for a level playing field. He said if a convicted person cannot be a government clerk, the same rule should apply to a politician.

Centre’s response:
The Government, in an affidavit filed by the Law Ministry in the court in December 2020, had rejected the idea of a lifetime ban on convicted persons contesting elections or becoming an office-bearer of a political party.

Why is the Centre against the lifetime ban?
- The Ministry had reasoned that MPs and MLAs were not bound by specific “service conditions”. They are bound by oath to serve citizens and country. They are bound by propriety, good conscience and interest of the nation.
- The Supreme Court in Public Interest Foundation case of 2019 said “though criminalisation of politics is a bitter manifest truth, which is a termite to the citadel of democracy, be that as it may, the court cannot make the law”.
- The government has maintained that disqualification under the Representation of the People Act of 1951 for the period of prison sentence and six years thereafter was enough for legislators.

Offences against MPs and MLAs- concerns:
States have a large number of criminal cases pending against former and sitting legislators. Uttar Pradesh may host the “largest”.

EC’s views:
The Election Commission of India (ECI), in 2017, had endorsed the call for a lifetime ban in the apex court.
- It had argued that such a move would “champion the cause of decriminalisation of politics”.
- The ECI had then agreed in the Supreme Court that a ban would be in the spirit of fundamental rights of the Constitution, including the right to equality.

Need of the hour:
There should not be any delay in complying with a Supreme Court decision to have high courts constitute Special Sessions and Magisterial Courts to quicken the pace of long-pending criminal cases against legislators across the country.

In a series of directions to make the right of information of a voter “more effective and meaningful”, the court has ordered:

- The Election Commission of India launched a dedicated mobile app for voters to get details of the criminal history of the candidates at the touch of a button.
- The Commission formed a separate cell to monitor political parties on their compliance with the court’s judgment.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Section 8 of the RP Act.
2. SC guidelines in this regard.
3. ECI- composition and functions.
4. CEC- appointment.
5. Powers of Election Commission on matters related to election of candidates.

Mains Link:
Discuss the concerns associated with criminalisation of politics and what the Supreme Court has done to address these concerns?


Topics: Appointment to various Constitutional posts, powers, functions and responsibilities of various Constitutional Bodies.

1. Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG):

Context:
1st Audit Diwas was celebrated on November 16. Audit Diwas is being celebrated to mark the historic origin of the institution of CAG and the contribution it has made to the governance, transparency and accountability over the past several years.

About CAG:
- The Constitution of India provides for an independent office of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) in chapter V under Part V.
- The CAG is mentioned in the Constitution of India under Article 148 – 151.
- He is the head of the Indian Audit and Accounts Department.
- He is the guardian of the public purse and controls the entire financial system of the country at both the levels- the centre and state.
- His duty is to uphold the Constitution of India and the laws of Parliament in the field of financial administration.

Appointment and Term to Constitutionals Posts:
- The CAG is appointed by the President of India by a warrant under his hand and seal.
- He holds office for a period of six years or upto the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier.

Duties:
1. CAG audits the accounts related to all expenditure from the Consolidated Fund of India, Consolidated Fund of each state and UT having a legislative assembly.
2. CAG audits all expenditure from the Contingency Fund of India and the Public Account of India as well as the Contingency Fund and Public Account of each state.
3. CAG audits all trading, manufacturing, profit and loss accounts, balance sheets and other subsidiary accounts kept by any department of the Central Government and the state governments.
4. CAG audits the receipts and expenditure of all bodies and authorities substantially financed from the Central or State revenues; government companies; other corporations and bodies, when so required by related laws.
5. He ascertains and certifies the net proceeds of any tax or duty and his certificate is final on the matter.

He acts as a guide, friend and philosopher of the Public Accounts Committee of the Parliament.
Reports:
- He submits his audit reports relating to the accounts of the Centre and State to the President and Governor, who shall, in turn, place them before both the houses of Parliament and the state legislature respectively.
- He submits 3 audit reports to the President: audit report on appropriation accounts, audit report on finance accounts and audit report on public undertakings.

Insta Curious: Do you know about the constitutional provisions which ensure the independence of the office of CAG? Reference: read this.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Differences between Consolidated and Contingency funds of India.
3. Reports submitted by CAG to the President.
4. CAG is appointed by?

Mains Link: CAG is instrumental in securing accountability of the executive to the parliament in the sphere of financial administration. Explain. List the constitutional provisions to ensure the independence of the CAG.

2. Suspension of MPs:

Context:
Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Prahlad Joshi sought the approval of the House for suspending 12 Rajya Sabha MPs for the remainder of the session.
- The reason for their suspension was “their unprecedented acts of misconduct, contemptuous, unruly and violent behaviour and intentional attacks on security personnel” on the last day of the Monsoon Session.

When can the presiding officer invoke suspension?
- Under Rule 255 (‘Withdrawal of member’) of the General Rules of Procedure of the Rajya Sabha, “The Chairman may direct any member whose conduct is in his opinion grossly disorderly to withdraw immediately from the Council and any member so ordered to withdraw shall do so forthwith and shall absent himself during the remainder of the day’s meeting.”

How is suspension under Rule 255 different from Suspension under Rule 256?
Rule 256 provides for ‘Suspension of Member’; whereas Rule 255 provides for lesser punishment.
- Under Rule 256, “the Chairman may, if he deems it necessary, suspend a member from the service of the Council for a period not exceeding the remainder of the Session.

Rules of parliamentary etiquette:
MPs are required to adhere to certain rules of parliamentary etiquette.
- For example the Lok Sabha rulebook specifies that MPs are not to interrupt the speech of others, maintain silence and not obstruct proceedings by hissing or making running commentaries during debates.

Newer forms of protest led to these rules being updated in 1989.
- Now, members should not shout slogans, display placards, tear up documents in protest, and play a cassette or a tape recorder in the House.

Rajya Sabha has similar rules. To conduct the proceedings smoothly, the rulebook also gives certain, similar powers to the presiding officers of both Houses.

Differences in powers of Speaker and Chairman of Rajya Sabha:
- Like the Speaker in Lok Sabha, the Chairman of Rajya Sabha is empowered under Rule Number 255 of its Rule Book to “direct any Member whose conduct is in his opinion grossly disorderly to withdraw immediately” from the House.
Unlike the Speaker, however, the Rajya Sabha Chairman does not have the power to suspend a Member.

Procedure to be followed for suspension of Rajya Sabha MPs:
1. The Chairman may “name a Member who disregards the authority of the Chair or abuses the rules of the Council by persistently and wilfully obstructing” business.
2. In such a situation, the House may adopt a motion suspending the Member from the service of the House for a period not exceeding the remainder of the session.
3. The House may, however, by another motion, terminate the suspension.

Efforts to bring order in the House:
As Chairman of Rajya Sabha, Vice-President Ansari had attempted several steps to bring order to the House. In 2013, he mooted a number of radical solutions to maintain decorum. This included:
1. Naming and shaming MPs in the Rajya Sabha bulletin for stepping outside House rules.
2. Those named were to include members who came into the Well, or indulged in other grossly disorderly behaviour.
3. The telecast of proceedings to be deferred to prevent visuals of disorder from being made public.

How can suspension of MPs be justified? Isn’t this an extreme step to take in order to curb unruly behaviour?
The solution to unruly behaviour has to be long-term and consistent with democratic values.
- There can be no question that the enforcement of the supreme authority of the Presiding Officer is essential for smooth conduct of proceedings.
- However, a balance has to be struck. It must be remembered that the job of the Presiding Officer is to run the House, not to lord over it.

How often have disruptions led to suspension of MPs?
- The first instance occurred in 1963. A few Lok Sabha MPs first interrupted President Sarvapalli Radhakrishnan and then walked out while he was delivering the joint address to both Houses.
- Lok Sabha ended in reprimanding these MPs. In 1989, 63 MPs were suspended from Lok Sabha on the discussion of the Thakar Commission report.
- More recently in 2010, 7 MPs were suspended from Rajya Sabha for snatching the women’s reservation bill from the minister.

Since then, MPs have raised slogans, used pepper spray in the House and displayed placards.

Insta Curious: Though rules with regard to Suspension of MPs are similar in Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha, there are, however, a few changes. In Lok Sabha, under Rule 374A, there is a provision for “automatic suspension” of an errant member. When can this provision be invoked? Reference:

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Power to suspend MPs vs powers to revoke suspension.
2. Difference in procedures followed by Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha in this regard.
3. Appeals with regard to election of MPs.

Mains Link:
The solution to unruly behaviour of MPs in Parliament has to be long-term and consistent with democratic values. Comment.

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

1. **Competition Commission of India:**

Context:
Fair trade regulator **CCI** will identify measures to enhance competition in the country’s **pharmaceutical sector** for ensuring affordability of drugs after analysing findings of its market study.

Need for:
The study has been initiated after observing issues such as lack of “effective consumer choice”.

www.insightsonindia.com
• Currently, it appears that, when it comes to medicines, competition is primarily on the basis of brands and not prices. The study will identify measures to increase competition for ensuring affordability of drugs.

**Indian Pharma Industry:**
• India enjoys an important position in the global pharmaceuticals sector, as India is the largest provider of generic drugs globally.
• The Indian pharmaceutical industry meets over 50% of global demand for various vaccines, 40% of generic demand in the U.S. and 25% of all medicine in the U.K.
• Presently, over 80% of the antiretroviral drugs used globally to combat AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) are supplied by Indian pharmaceutical firms.
• **The Indian pharmaceuticals market is the world’s third-largest in terms of volume and thirteenth-largest in terms of value.** It has established itself as a global manufacturing and research hub.
• India has one of the lowest manufacturing costs in the world – lower than that of the U.S. and almost half of the cost in Europe.

**Challenges that need to be addressed:**
**Dependence:** Indian pharmaceutical industry is highly dependent on China for pharmaceutical raw materials. These raw materials are called the Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (API), also known as bulk drugs. Indian drug-makers import around 70% of their total bulk drug requirements from China.

**Fake versions of high value and/or high volume brands of the pharmaceutical companies in India** are adversely affecting their business performance posing another major challenge. It also creates a negative impact to the end consumer and a huge health hazard.

**So, what India is doing?**
Call for greater self-reliance: In June, the department of pharmaceuticals announced a scheme for the promotion of three bulk drug parks in the country.
• A bulk drug park will have a designated contiguous area of land with common infrastructure facilities for the exclusive manufacture of APIs, DIs or KSMs, and also a common waste management system.
• These parks are expected to bring down manufacturing costs of bulk drugs in the country and increase competitiveness in the domestic bulk drug industry.

**About the Competition Commission Of India:**
The Competition Commission of India (CCI) was established under the Competition Act, 2002 for the administration, implementation and enforcement of the Act, and was duly constituted in March 2009. Chairman and members are appointed by the central government.

**Functions of the commission:**
1. It is the duty of the Commission to eliminate practices having adverse effects on competition, promote and sustain competition, protect the interests of consumers and ensure freedom of trade in the markets of India.
2. The Commission is also required to give opinion on competition issues on a reference received from a statutory authority established under any law and to undertake competition advocacy, create public awareness and impart training on competition issues.

**The Competition Act:**
The Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1969 (MRTP Act) was repealed and replaced by the Competition Act, 2002, on the recommendations of the Raghavan committee.
• The Competition Act, 2002, as amended by the Competition (Amendment) Act, 2007, prohibits anti-competitive agreements, abuse of dominant position by enterprises and regulates combinations (acquisition, acquiring of control and M&A), which causes or likely to cause an appreciable adverse effect on competition within India.

**Insta Curious:** Do you know about the International Competition Network? How might cartels be worse than monopolies? Read this.

www.insightsonindia.com 41 InsightsIAS
2. **General consent to CBI:**

**Context:**
The Supreme Court has expressed concern over a submission by the CBI that since 2018, around 150 requests for sanction to investigate have been pending with eight state governments that have withdrawn general consent to the agency.

**Background:**
The CBI had filed the affidavit after the court inquired last month about the bottlenecks it faced, and the steps it had taken to strengthen prosecutions.

**Which states have withdrawn general consent, and why?**
Eight states have currently withdrawn consent to the CBI: Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Kerala, and Mizoram. All except Mizoram are ruled by the opposition.

**Centre’s response:**
- State governments do not have any “absolute” power to keep the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) from investigating crimes inside the State.
- Not even the Union government, has the authority to rattle the autonomy of the premier agency to conduct investigations.
- Also, withdrawal of general consent would not stand in the way of constitutional courts entrusting the CBI with the cases “where it is found that the State Police would not effectively conduct a fair and impartial investigation”.
- Besides, the CBI was empowered to probe cases concerning any of the Central subjects enumerated in the Union List in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.

**Why is consent necessary?**
The CBI is governed by the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act that makes consent of a state government mandatory for conducting investigation in that state.

**There are two kinds of consent:**

**Case-specific and general—** Given that the CBI has jurisdiction only over central government departments and employees, it can investigate a case involving state government employees or a violent crime in a given state only after that state government gives its consent.

- “General consent” is normally given to help the CBI seamlessly conduct its investigation into cases of corruption against central government employees in the concerned state.

**What does withdrawal mean?**
It simply means that CBI officers will lose all powers of a police officer as soon as they enter the state unless the state government has allowed them.

- The decision means the CBI will now have to get consent from the state government for every case it registers in Maharashtra.

**Under what provision can general consent be withdrawn?**
In exercise of power conferred by **Section 6 of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946**, the state governments can withdraw the general consent accorded.

**Can withdrawal mean that the CBI can no longer probe any case?**

No. The CBI would still have the power to investigate old cases registered when general consent existed. Also, cases registered anywhere else in the country, but involving people stationed in states which have withdrawn consent, would allow CBI’s jurisdiction to extend to these states.

**Calcutta High Court verdict:**

Calcutta High Court recently ruled in a case of illegal coal mining and cattle smuggling being investigated by the CBI, that the central agency cannot be stopped from probing an employee of the central government in another state. The order has been challenged in the Supreme Court.

- **In Vinay Mishra vs the CBI,** Calcutta HC ruled in July this year that corruption cases must be treated equally across the country, and a central government employee could not be “distinguished” just because his office was located in a state that had withdrawn general consent.
- The HC also said that withdrawal of consent would apply in cases where only employees of the state government were involved.

**Insta Curious:**

Suits under Article 131 are filed exclusively in the Supreme Court with regard to disputes between States, or between the Centre and State. Do you know about the original jurisdiction of the Supreme Court? Reference: read [this](https://www.indianexpress.com/article/explained/sc-state-government-consent-cbi-investigation-7617317/lite/).

**InstaLinks:**

- **Prelims Link:**
  1. About CBI and its establishment.
  3. What is General Consent?
  4. What happens when general consent is withdrawn by states?

- **Mains Link:**
  Can withdrawal mean that the CBI can no longer probe any case? Discuss.


3. **Autonomy of CBI:**

**Context:**

The Centre has told the Supreme Court that the CBI is an “autonomous body” and it has no ‘control’ over the investigative agency.

**What’s the issue?**

- The response came while objecting to a suit filed by the West Bengal Government making the Union of India, and not the CBI, party.
- West Bengal has, in the case, challenged the CBI’s jurisdiction to register FIRs and conduct investigations in the State in myriad cases. The State had withdrawn its “general consent” to the CBI way back in 2018.

**Observations made by the Centre:**

- CBI operates under the **Delhi Special Police Establishment Act (DSPE),** and it also derives its authority to register cases under the same law. The Union of India has nothing to do with it.
- It is **the central vigilance commission (CVC)** which has been tasked with superintendence over CBI, and the CVC Act makes it clear that there cannot be any interference with the investigations conducted by the agency.

**Challenges associated with the autonomy of CBI:**

1. The agency is **dependent on the home ministry** for staffing, since many of its investigators come from the Indian Police Service.
2. The agency depends on the law ministry for lawyers and also lacks functional autonomy to some extent.

3. The CBI, run by IPS officers on deputation, is also susceptible to the government’s ability to manipulate the senior officers, because they are dependent on the Central government for future postings.

4. Dependence on State governments for invoking its authority to investigate cases in a State, even when such investigation targets a Central government employee.

5. Since police is a State subject under the Constitution, and the CBI acts as per the procedure prescribed by the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), which makes it a police agency, the CBI needs the consent of the State government in question before it can make its presence in that State. This is a cumbersome procedure and has led to some ridiculous situations.

SC over CBI’s autonomy:
The landmark judgment in Vineet Narain v. Union of India in 1997 laid out several steps to secure the autonomy of CBI.

Why was it called caged parrot by the Supreme Court?
1. Politicisation of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has been a work in progress for years.
2. Corruption and Politically biased: This was highlighted in Supreme Court criticism for being a caged parrot speaking in its master’s voice.
3. CBI has been accused of becoming ‘handmaiden’ to the party in power, as a result high profile cases are not treated seriously.
4. Since CBI is run by central police officials on deputation hence chances of getting influenced by government was visible in the hope of better future postings.

What institutional reforms are needed?
1. Ensure that CBI operates under a formal, modern legal framework that has been written for a contemporary investigative agency.
2. The Second Administrative Reforms Commission (2007) suggested that a new law should be enacted to govern the working of the CBI.
3. Parliamentary standing committee (2007) recommended that a separate act should be promulgated in tune with requirement with time to ensure credibility and impartiality.
4. The 19th and 24th reports of the parliamentary standing committees (2007 and 2008) recommended that the need of the hour is to strengthen the CBI in terms of legal mandate, infrastructure and resources.
5. The government must ensure financial autonomy for the outfit.
6. It is also possible to consider granting the CBI and other federal investigation agencies the kind of autonomy that the Comptroller and Auditor General enjoys as he is only accountable to Parliament.
7. A new CBI Act should be promulgated that ensures the autonomy of CBI while at the same time improving the quality of supervision. The new Act must specify criminal culpability for government interference.
8. One of the demands that has been before Supreme Court, and in line with international best practices, is for the CBI to develop its own dedicated cadre of officers who are not bothered about deputation and abrupt transfers.
9. A more efficient parliamentary oversight over the federal criminal and intelligence agencies could be a way forward to ensure better accountability, despite concerns regarding political misuse of the oversight.

Insta Curious: Suits under Article 131 are filed exclusively in the Supreme Court with regard to disputes between States, or between the Centre and State. Do you know about the original jurisdiction of the Supreme Court? Reference: read this.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link: 1. About CBI and its establishment.
3. What is General Consent?
4. What happens when general consent is withdrawn by states? Mains Link: Can withdrawal mean that the CBI can no longer probe any case? Discuss.

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

1. Khasi Inheritance of Property Bill, 2021:

Context:
Last week, a district autonomous council in Meghalaya announced that it would introduce the ‘Khali Inheritance of Property Bill, 2021.

- It is aimed at “equitable distribution” of parental property among siblings in the Khali community.

Implications:
If implemented, the proposed Bill would modify an age-old customary practice of inheritance of the matrilineal Khali tribe.

Aims and Objectives of the Bill:
1. Equitable distribution” of parental property among siblings – both male and female.
2. Let parents decide who they want their property to inherit.
3. Prevent a sibling from getting parental property if they marry a non-Khali and accept the spouse’s customs and culture.

Need for this Bill:
Many times, boys are not able to take loans because there is no collateral to show. Sometimes, when a couple has no children, and there is no genuine heir, the clan takes over the property, as per custom. It leads to a number of litigations by children against their parents.

But, why does the matrilineal system in Meghalaya rarely empower women?
- Custodianship is often misconstrued as ownership vested in just one person, that is the youngest daughter. This custodianship comes with the responsibility to care for aged parents, unmarried or destitute siblings and other clan members.
- Moreover, the custodian cannot buy or sell the land, without taking permission from her maternal uncle.
- Also, most of the property is clan property or community property.

Matriline in Meghalaya:
The three tribes of Meghalaya — Khali, Jaintias, and Garos — practise a matrilineal system of inheritance. In this system, lineage and descent are traced through the mother’s clan.

- Here, children take the mother’s surname, the husband moves into his wife’s house, and the youngest daughter (khatduh) of the family is bequeathed the full share of the ancestral — or the clan’s — property.
- Custom also dictates that the khatduh cannot sell the property, without permission of her mother’s brother (maternal uncle) — since he technically belongs to the mother’s clan, through which descent is traced.
- This inheritance tradition applies only to ancestral or clan/community property, which has been with the family for years.
- In this traditional set-up, if a couple does not have any daughters, then the property goes to the wife’s elder sister, and her daughters. If the wife does not have sisters, then the clan usually takes over the property.

Insta Curious: Did you know that the Dorbar Shnong (traditional Khali village governing bodies) debar women from contesting elections? Reference: read this.

InstaLinks:
1. Khali tribes.

www.insightsonindia.com
2. Why Tamil Nadu’s DMK govt is opposed to National Education Policy?

**Context:**
Chief Minister M K Stalin has said the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 will not be implemented in Tamil Nadu. An expert committee would be formed soon to prepare a new education policy of the state.

**Why is Tamil Nadu opposed to NEP?**
Tamil Nadu’s arguments:
NEP being recommended by the Centre was “for elites” and the education “will be confined and limited to a few sections”.
- Besides the opposition to three-language policy, the state has also questioned the prominence given to Sanskrit over and above Tamil and other languages.
- Above all, NEP intrudes into a crucial domain of the state – education.
- Therefore, NEP is being viewed as a policy against social justice, federalism, pluralism and equality.

**Is it possible for Tamil Nadu to not implement NEP and formulate its own education policy?**
- The very word ‘policy’ in the National Education Policy, 2020 indicates that it is only a recommendation, not binding on anything or anyone.
• Also, education is in the concurrent list, not in the union list.

Previously, when Rajiv Gandhi brought in the second national education policy in 1986, many parties had opposed it. Like the agriculture policy, even after the law was passed by Parliament, a number of legislatures passed resolutions against it.

Insta Curious: Do you know about the first Kothari Commission? What were its recommendations? Reference: read this.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Overview of new Pedagogical Structure with 5+3+3+4 design.
2. What are Special Educational Zones as per the new policy?
3. Who will set up the Gender Education Fund as per the policy?
4. Role of the proposed Academic Bank of Credit.
5. Gross Enrolment Ratio target in higher education?
6. About the proposed national educational technology forum.

Mains Link: Discuss the significance of the recently announced New Education Policy 2020.


3. Haryana private sector quota law to take effect from Jan 15:

Context:
Haryana government has ordered that the law (the Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Bill) providing for 75% reservation for locals in private sector jobs come into force from January 15, 2022.

Highlights of the law:
• The law provides for 75% reservation in private sector jobs to those having a resident certificate (domicile).
• The law will be applicable for a period of 10 years.
• Jobs with a gross monthly salary of not more than ₹30,000 will be up for hiring from among local candidates.

Rationale behind the law:
To create a harmonious environment for industry as well as the youth along with creating the right balance between the progress of industries and the economy.

Concerns over the bill:
• It could lead to multinational firms moving out of the state.
• Reservation affects productivity and industry competitiveness.

What are the legal issues in such laws?

www.insightsonindia.com
1. **The question of domicile reservation in jobs:** While domicile quotas in education are fairly common, courts have been reluctant in expanding this to public employment. It raises questions relating to the fundamental right to equality of citizens.

2. **The issue of forcing the private sector to comply with reservations in employment.** For mandating reservation in public employment, the state draws its power from **Article 16(4) of the Constitution**. But, the Constitution has no manifest provision for private employment from which the state draws the power to make laws mandating reservation.

3. It may not be able to withstand judicial scrutiny on the touchstone of **Article 19(1)(g).**

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. Key provisions of the Bill.
2. Article 16 of the Indian Constitution is related to?

**Mains Link:**
Discuss issues associated with Jharkhand’s move to reserve 75% private jobs.

Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G2I95P4A7.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G2I95P4A7.1&imageview=0).

---

**4. Midday meal scheme:**

**Context:**
Flagging “critical” levels of malnutrition and anaemia among children, the Union Government has urged the states to explore the possibility of introducing millets in the **mid-day meal scheme, now known as PM Poshan.**

**Need for and significance:**
*Millet* or *nutri-cereals*, which include Jowar, Bajra, and Ragi, are rich in minerals and B-complex vitamins, as well as proteins and antioxidants, making them an ideal choice for improving the nutritional outcome of children.

**About the Mid-Day meal scheme:**
The scheme guarantees one meal to all children in government and aided schools and madarasas supported under **Samagra Shiksha.**
- Students up to Class VIII are guaranteed one nutritional cooked meal at least 200 days in a year.
- The Scheme comes under the Ministry of HRD.
- It was launched in the year 1995 as the National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NP – NSPE), a centrally sponsored scheme. In 2004, the scheme was relaunched as the Mid Day Meal Scheme.
- The Scheme is also covered by the **National Food Security Act, 2013.**

**Objective:**
Address hunger and malnutrition, increase enrolment and attendance in school, improve socialisation among castes, provide employment at grassroot level especially to women.

**The MDM rules 2015, provide that:**
- The place of serving meals to the children shall be school only.
- If the Mid-Day Meal is not provided in school on any school day due to non-availability of food grains or any other reason, the State Government shall pay **food security allowance** by 15th of the succeeding month.
- The School Management Committee mandated under the **Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009** shall also monitor implementation of the Mid-day meal Scheme.

**Nutritional norms:**

[FOOD NORMS UNDER MID-DAY MEAL](https://www.insightsonindia.com)
In terms of calorie intake, as per the MDM guidelines, the children in primary schools must be provided with at least 450 calories with 12 grams of protein through MDM while the children in upper primary schools should get 700 calories with 20 grams of protein, as per MHRD. The food intake per meal by the children of primary classes, as provided by MHRD is 100 grams of food grains, 20 grams of pulses, 50 grams of vegetables and 5 grams of oils and fats. For the children of upper-primary schools, the mandated breakup is 150 grams of food grains, 30 grams of pulses, 75 grams of vegetables and 7.5 grams of oils and fats.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Origin of MDMS.
2. When was it renamed?
3. Difference between centrally sponsored and Central sector schemes? What kind of scheme of the MDMS?
4. Financing under the scheme.
5. Nutritional norms prescribed.
6. Coverage under the scheme.

7. Responsibility to pay food security allowance under the scheme.

Mains Link:
Discuss the significance of Mid-Day Meal scheme.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GMT8S40S8.1&imagew=0.

5. National Register of Citizens (NRC):

Context:
Only little over a thousand doubtful cases in the final draft of the National Register of Citizens (NRC), Assam have been referred to the concerned district commissioners for necessary action.

Background:
More than 19 lakh of the 3.29 crore applicants in Assam were excluded from the final draft register published on August 31, 2019, which cost ₹1,220 crore.
- The government had rejected the NRC in its current form and demanded re-verification of at least 30% names in areas bordering Bangladesh and 10% in the rest of the State.

Background:
The Supreme Court had monitored the exercise of updating the NRC of 1951 in Assam. About 19.06 lakh out of 3.3 crore applicants were excluded from the updated draft.

About NRC:
- At its core, the NRC is an official record of those who are legal Indian citizens. It includes demographic information about all those individuals who qualify as citizens of India as per the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- The register was first prepared after the 1951 Census of India and since then it has not been updated until recently.

NRC in Assam:
So far, such a database has only been maintained for the state of Assam.
- The exercise was a culmination of Assam Accord of 1985 signed between the Centre and the All Assam Students’ Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) for detection, disenfranchisement and deportation of foreigners.

Why was NRC updated for Assam?
In 2013, the SC ordered the updation of the NRC, in accordance with Citizenship Act, 1955 and Citizenship Rules, 2003 in all parts of Assam. The process officially started in 2015.

Issues present:
- Lakhs of people were left out of the complete draft of Assam’s National Register of Citizens (NRC) published in 2018.
• As per the Supreme Court mandated rules, those left out of the draft NRC list had to mandatorily submit their biometrics during the hearings of ‘claims’ (to include themselves in the NRC) and ‘objections’ (to object to someone else’s inclusion) process.

• **27 lakh people** who were left out from the list published in 2018 submitted their biometric details and amongst these **only 8 lakh people** made it into the draft list published in 2019. However, these 8 lakh people are struggling to get Aadhaar, and concerned about benefits linked to it.

• **Lack of clarity and inability to enjoy the full benefits** emanating from Aadhar has caused significant mental pressure on individuals.

• This situation has arisen primarily due to the lack of clarity over the NRC exercise since the government is withholding assigning Aadhar to these newly added individuals since the **complete and final NRC list is yet to be published.**

**Insta Curious:** What is NPR? Is it Linked to NRC? Reference: read [this](https://www.insightsonindia.com).

**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:**
Discuss why a nationwide NRC exercise may not be feasible.


---

### 6. Unique Land Parcel Identification Number (ULPIN) scheme:

**Context:**
'Bhumi Samvaad' - a National Workshop on Digital India Land Record Modernisation Programme (DILRMP) was held recently at India Habitat Centre here in the national capital.

- Talking about the importance of **Unique Land Parcel Identification Numbers (ULPIN)**, Shri Singh said it is just like the Aadhar Number of land parcels.
- He said that in this unique system wherein a unique ID based on **Geo-coordinates** of the parcels is generated and assigned to the plots.

**About the Scheme:**

- Under the scheme, a 14-digit identification number will be issued to every plot of land in the country.
- It is being described as “the Aadhaar for land” — a number that would uniquely identify every surveyed parcel of land and prevent land fraud, especially in rural India, where land records are outdated and disputed.
- The identification will be based on the longitude and latitude of the land parcel, and is dependent on detailed surveys and geo-referenced cadastral maps.

**Benefits:**
The benefits of ULPIN are multitudinous. The single source of information can authenticate the ownership and in turn it can end the dubious ownership. It will help identify the government lands easily and protect land from shabby land transaction.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. About ULPIN.
2. Key features.
3. About DILRMP.

**Mains Link:**
Write a note on the Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme (DILRMP).
7. Plea in Supreme Court on new Ordinances:

Context:
Petitions have been filed in the Supreme Court urging the Supreme Court to quash the Ordinances, which allow the Government to extend the tenures of the chiefs of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED) “in a piecemeal fashion” up to a maximum of five years.

Issues:
- The petitioners said the Ordinances would leave the heads of the two top investigative bodies insecure about their tenure and erode their professional independence.
- Also, no criteria has been provided save for a vague reference to ‘public interest’ which is based on the subjective satisfaction of the Respondents.
- The Government’s move has also drawn sharp criticism from the Opposition parties, which have accused it of taking the ordinance route despite the Parliament session beginning on November 29.

About the Ordinances:
The Union Government has brought in two ordinances allowing the service of the directors of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to be extended beyond their fixed tenure of at least two years up to a maximum of five years.
- The extension can be given only one year at a time. That is, after a fixed two-year tenure, they may get three annual extensions.

On what grounds have these ordinances been challenged?
About a year ago, the ED Director had been given a one-year extension retrospectively following the completion of a two-year fixed tenure. The move was challenged before the Supreme Court, which upheld the government’s decision. However, it said that such a drastic measure should be taken only rarely.
- The petitioners, who allege that the two ordinances are arbitrary and unconstitutional, cite the judgment, as well as the Apex Court verdict in Vineet Narain vs Union of India (1997) which held that the CBI and the ED chiefs should have a minimum tenure of two years.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About CBI and its establishment.
3. What is General Consent?
4. What happens when general consent is withdrawn by states?
Mains Link:
Can withdrawal mean that the CBI can no longer probe any case? Discuss.
Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G73970QSQ.1&imageview=0.

8. PESA Act:

Context:
One Day National Conference was organized on the Provisions of the Panchayats (Extension to the Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) to celebrate 25th year of PESA Act, as part of Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav.

About the PESA Act, 1996:
The Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 or PESA Act is a law enacted by the Government of India for ensuring self-governance through traditional Gram Sabhas for people living in the Scheduled Areas of India.
- It was enacted by Parliament in 1996 and came into force on 24th December 1996.
- The PESA is considered to be the backbone of tribal legislation in India.
- PESA recognises the traditional system of the decision-making process and stands for the peoples’ self-governance.

Background:
www.insightsonindia.com
To promote local self-governance in rural India, the **73rd constitutional amendment** was made in 1992. Through this amendment, a **three-tier Panchayati Raj Institution** was made into a law.

- However, its application to the scheduled and tribal areas under Article 243(M) was restricted.
- After the **Bhuria Committee recommendations** in 1995, **Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act 1996** came into existence for ensuring tribal self-rule for people living in scheduled areas of India.
- The **PESA conferred the absolute powers to Gram Sabha**, whereas state legislature has given an advisory role to ensure the proper functioning of Panchayats and Gram Sabhas.
- The **power delegated to Gram Sabha cannot be curtailed** by a higher level, and there shall be independence throughout.

### Important Features of PESA-Act

- Gram Sabha approves the plans, programmes and projects
- Gram Sabha is competent to safeguard and preserve the tradition & customs and cultural identity
- Gram Sabha identifies the beneficiaries.
- Gram Sabha is endowed with the ownership of MFPs.
- Approval of Utilisation Certificates in Gram Sabhas.
- Reservation of seats.
- Gram Sabha or PAL is consulted for land acquisition, management of minor water bodies, grant of licence or mining lease, prohibition/regulation of the sale & consumption of any intoxicant, power to prevent alienation of land, managing village markets and others.

### Powers and functions given to the Gram Sabhas:

- Right to mandatory consultation in land acquisition, resettlement and rehabilitation of displaced persons.
- Protection of traditional belief, the culture of the tribal communities
- Ownership of minor forest products
- Resolution of the local disputes
- Prevention of land alienation
- Management of village markets
- Right to control production, distillation, and prohibition of liquor
- Exercise of control over money-lending
- Any other rights involving the Scheduled Tribes.

### Issues Related to PESA:

**The state governments are supposed to enact state laws for their Scheduled Areas** in consonance with this national law. This has resulted in the **partially implemented PESA**.

- The **partial implementation has worsened self-governance in Adivasi areas**, like in Jharkhand.
- Many experts have asserted that PESA did not deliver due to the lack of clarity, legal infirmity, bureaucratic apathy, absence of a political will, resistance to change in the hierarchy of power, and so on.
- As per Social audits conducted across the state, in reality different developmental schemes were being approved on paper by Gram Sabha, without actually having any meeting for discussion and decision making.

### InstaLinks:

**Prelims Link:**
1. About PESA.
2. Key features.
3. Rights under the act.

**Mains Link:**
4. Role of Gram Sabhas.
5. Social audits.

### 9. JPC retains exemption clause, adopts personal data Bill:

**Context:**

The **Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC)** on **the Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill, 2019** has submitted its report.

- It has retained the controversial **exemption clause** that allows the Government to keep any of its agencies outside the purview of the law with minor changes.

**Key recommendations made:**

- **Stricter regulations for social media platforms**: The Committee recommended that all social media platforms, which did not act as intermediaries, should be treated as publishers and be held accountable for
the content they host, and should be held responsible for the content from unverified accounts on their platforms.

- It said no social media platform should be allowed to operate unless the parent company handling the technology sets up an office in India and that a statutory media regulatory authority, on the lines of the Press Council of India, may be set up for the regulation of the contents on all such platforms irrespective of the platform where their content is published.

- Some of the other recommendations of the committee included development of an alternative indigenous financial system for cross-border payments on the lines of Ripple (U.S.) and INSTEX (European Union).

**Clause 35 - a Controversial provision in the Bill:**

Clause 35, in the name of “public order”, “sovereignty”, “friendly relations with foreign states” and “security of the state”, allowed any agency under the Union Government exemption from all or any provisions of the law.

This was one of the widely debated clauses in the panel meetings.

**Various suggestions in this regard:**

- The members had argued that “public order” should be removed as a ground for exemption.
- They had also pressed for “judicial or parliamentary oversight” for granting such exemptions.
- The members had also suggested that “there should be an order in writing with reasons for exempting a certain agency from the ambit of the Bill”.
- Some of them had asked that only partial exemption should be given to the agency if needed.

However, none of these suggestions was accepted.

**Rationale behind the retention of this clause:**

- A secure nation alone provides the atmosphere which ensures personal liberty and privacy of an individual whereas multiple examples exist where without individual liberty and privacy, national security itself gives rise to autocratic regimes.
- The report noted that this clause was for “certain legitimate purposes” and also said there was precedent in the form of the reasonable restrictions imposed upon the liberty of an individual, as guaranteed under Article 19 of the Constitution and the Puttaswamy judgment.

**Concerns raised against certain provisions:**

The Bill did not provide adequate safeguards to protect the right to privacy and gave an overboard exemption to the Government. Clause 35 was open to misuse since it gave unqualified powers to the Government.

**The Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill 2019:**

The genesis of this Bill lies in the report prepared by a Committee of Experts headed by Justice B.N. Srikrishna. The committee was constituted by the government in the course of hearings before the Supreme Court in the right to privacy case (Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India).

How does the bill seek to regulate data?

The bill constitutes 3 personal information types:

1. Critical
2. Sensitive
3. General

**Other Key provisions:**

- **Data principal:** As per the bill, it is the individual whose data is being stored and processed.
Social media companies, which are deemed significant data fiduciaries based on factors such as volume and sensitivity of data as well as their turnover, should develop their own user verification mechanism. An independent regulator Data Protection Agency (DPA) will oversee assessments and audits and definition making. Each company will have a Data Protection Officer (DPO) who will liaise with the DPA for auditing, grievance redressal, recording maintenance and more. The bill also grants individuals the right to data portability, and the ability to access and transfer one’s own data.
The right to be forgotten: This right allows an individual to remove consent for data collection and disclosure.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Data protection bill.
3. Parliamentary panels.
4. Puttaswamy judgment.
5. Right to Privacy.

Mains Link:
Comment on the controversial provisions of the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GT697EK7E.1&imageview=0.

10. A.P. to rework law on three capitals move:

Context:
The Andhra Pradesh Assembly has passed a Bill to repeal the A.P. Decentralisation and Inclusive Development of All Regions Act (aimed at setting up three capitals), and the Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) Repeal Act of 2020.

- The Government plans to bring a more comprehensive law that ‘dispels the wrong notions of the land-givers in Amaravati’ and clarifies its position on the legalities raised by the petitioners in the High Court.

Need for:
The repeal was intended to impart more clarity to the policy of decentralisation and an exhaustive explanation to all sections of people.

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. Uttarakhand - Dehradun is the winter capital and Bhararisen is the summer capital.
4. 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=GT697EO11.1&imageview=0.

---

11. **Vehicle scrappage policy:**

**Context:**
The Government is considering a proposal to give buyers additional concessions on buying new vehicles after scrapping of their old vehicles.

- The final decision (on providing more incentives under the National Automobile Scrappage Policy) will be taken by the finance ministry and the GST Council.

**About the Vehicle Scrappage Policy:**
1. Old vehicles will have to pass a fitness test before re-registration and as per the policy government commercial vehicles more than 15 years old and private vehicles which are over 20 years old will be scrapped.
2. As a disincentive, increased re-registration fees would be applicable for vehicles 15 years or older from the initial date registration.
3. The state governments may be advised to offer a road-tax rebate of up to 25% for personal vehicles and up to 15% for commercial vehicles to provide incentive to owners of old vehicles to scrap old and unfit vehicles.

**Significance:**
- The vehicle scrapping policy is aimed at creating an eco-system for phasing out unfit and polluting vehicles in an environmentally friendly and safe manner.
- The initiative will promote a circular economy and make the process of economic development more sustainable and environment friendly.
- The policy will also bring in investments of around Rs 10,000 crore and create 35,000 job opportunities.

**Issues with the new policy:**
1. Limited incentive and poor cost economics for trucks.
2. Lack of addressable volumes for other segments.
3. The potential benefit from scrapping a 15-year-old, entry-level small car will be ₹70,000, whereas its resale value is around ₹95,000. That makes scrapping unattractive.

**Need of the hour:**
With this background, for the scrappage policy to be seamlessly implemented, we should have a comprehensive plan in terms of removing ELV (End of life vehicles) from the road. Freight transporters need stronger financial support. However, that said, it is important to note that unless old fleet vehicles are off the road, the benefits of implementation of BSVI vehicles will not be fully leveraged.

**Insta Curious:** Did you know about the international convention related to ship recycling? It is also known as the Hong Kong Convention? Read here.

**InstaLinks:**

www.insightsonindia.com
1. Key features of the policy. Discuss the issues associated with the policy.
2. Applicability.

Mains Link:

12. Trade Unions push for repeal of labour codes:

Context:
Over a year since Parliament passed four labour codes (on wages, social security, occupational safety and industrial relations), the Centre is still in the process of notifying the rules to implement the laws and has not set a date for the roll-out.
- Trade unions, however, have planned to intensify their agitation this week against the codes in the wake of the government’s decision to repeal the three farm laws.

What are the demands by trade unions?
The two codes we accepted — on wages and social security — be implemented immediately and the two to which we had objections — industrial relations and occupational safety — be reviewed.

About the labour codes:
The new set of regulations consolidates 44 labour laws under 4 categories of Codes namely, Wage Code; Social Security Code; Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions Code; and the Industrial Relations Code.
- The Parliament has already passed all the four Codes and it has also received the President’s assent.

The 4 codes are:
1. The Code on Wages, 2019, applying to all the employees in organized as well as unorganized sector, aims to regulate wage and bonus payments in all employments and aims at providing equal remuneration to employees performing work of a similar nature in every industry, trade, business, or manufacture.
2. The Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions, 2020 seeks to regulate the health and safety conditions of workers in establishments with 10 or more workers, and in all mines and docks.

Issues with these codes:
- The work hours provisions for regular workers do not provide flexibility to fix work hours beyond eight hours a day.
- The codes have also missed laying down uniform provisions for part-time employees.
- There are also provisions that impact employee wages.
- The labour codes also chalk out fines on businesses for non-compliance of provisions, second offences and officer-in-default. In the current pandemic situation, a majority of small businesses are in no position to adopt and implement the labour code changes.

Insta Curious: Did you know that labour is on the Concurrent List of the Constitution and, therefore, both the Centre and the States have to notify rules under these four codes to make them the laws of the land in their respective jurisdictions?

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About the codes.
2. Key provisions.
3. Labour as a subject.

Mains Link: Discuss the concerns associated with four labour codes.
13. **UP anti-conversion law:**

**Context:**
The Uttar Pradesh Police have registered a total of 108 cases under a controversial ordinance that criminalises religious conversion by “force, undue influence, coercion, or allurement”.

- The Prohibition of Unlawful Religious Conversion Ordinance, 2020, which was replaced by an Act earlier this year, completes a year.

**Why is this law controversial?**
This law was passed by the UP government to tackle “unlawful religious conversions” and to address “love jihad”, which is described as an alleged conspiracy by Muslim men to convert Hindu women to Islam by wooing and marrying them.

**Overview of the law:**
1. It makes religious conversion for marriage a non-bailable offence.
2. The onus will be on the defendant to prove that conversion was not for marriage.
3. The notice period to the district magistrate for the religious conversion is two months.
4. In case of conversion done by a woman for the sole purpose of marriage, the marriage would be declared null and void.

**Penalties:**
1. Violation of the provisions of the law would invite a jail term of not less than one year extendable to five years with a fine of ₹15,000.
2. If a minor woman or a woman from the Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribes communities was converted through the said unlawful means, the jail term would be a minimum of three years and could be extended to 10 years with a fine of ₹25,000.
3. The ordinance also lays down strict action, including cancellation of registration of social organisations conducting mass conversions.

**Why this has become a controversial law?**
The ordinance comes days after the Allahabad high court said in a verdict (Salamat Ansari-Priyanka Kharwar case) that 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.

- The verdict also said earlier court rulings that ‘religious conversion for marriage was unacceptable’ was not good in law.

**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.

**What are the Concerns associated? What are the challenges ahead?**
The true danger with this new so-called ‘love jihad’ law lies in its ambiguity.

- The law employs the use of open-textured phrases such as “undue influence”, “allurement” and “coercion”.
- Indeed, even the question of whether a religious conversion is truly conducted solely for the purpose of a marriage is inherently vague.
- It is in the subjective assessment and appreciation of these tenuous phrases that the real peril lies – this is a matter left entirely to the discretion of the judge.

**Views of the Supreme Court:**

www.insightsonindia.com
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:**
2. Article 25.
3. What has the Allahabad High Court said in Salamat Ansari-Priyanka Kharwar case.

**Mains Link:**
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.

### 14. Krishna River water dispute:

**Context:**
Telangana and Andhra Pradesh have submitted in the Supreme Court that there is no information forthcoming from Karnataka for the past 14 years about how much Krishna river water it has diverted.

- In turn, Karnataka argued that a lot water is going waste — “flowing down into the ocean” — and there is a need to harness it for irrigation and to replenish dry regions.

**Demands by Karnataka?**
Karnataka has sought the vacation of a November 16, 2011 of the Supreme Court which stopped the Centre from publishing in the Official Gazette the final order of the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal II (KWDT) pronounced in December 2010, allocating the river water to Karnataka, erstwhile Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra.

- The KWDT had further modified its final order and report on November 29, 2013 to allot surplus water to Karnataka, Maharashtra and the erstwhile State of Andhra Pradesh while preserving the allocation of 2130 TMC already made amongst them.

**What’s the issue now?**
The publication of the order of the Tribunal is a necessary pre-condition for its implementation. However, following the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, its successors Telangana and Andhra Pradesh had moved the Supreme Court challenging the KWDT’s allocation of shares.

**What needs to be done now?**
Karnataka has argued that its dam and irrigation projects worth thousands of crores to provide water to its parched northern areas have been stalled for all these years because of the 2011 order of the Supreme Court to not publish the KWDT decisions in the Official Gazette under Section 6(1) of the Inter-State Water Disputes Act of 1956.

- Karnataka has argued that the dispute raised by Andhra Pradesh and Telangana was between them and did not concern it.

**Challenges ahead for Karnataka:**
1. The decision of the KWDT was enforceable only till 2050, after which it has to reviewed or revised. Ten years have already lapsed in litigation since 2010. Karnataka required at least 10 years to complete several irrigation projects whose costs were pegged at ₹60,000 crore in 2014-15.
2. The costs would escalate annually by 10% to 15%. Even if the irrigation projects are completed in 10 years, the Central Water Commission clearances would take time.

**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.

Insta Curious: Do you know about the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes? [Click here.]

InstaLinks:

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


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

1. **SMILE Scheme:**

Context:
The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has formulated this scheme for Support for Marginalized Individuals.

About the scheme:
- **“SMILE stands for Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise”**.
- **Focus of the scheme is** on rehabilitation, provision of medical facilities, counseling, basic documentation, education, skill development, economic linkages etc.
- **It includes sub scheme** - ‘Central Sector Scheme for Comprehensive Rehabilitation of persons engaged in the act of Begging’.
- The scheme would be implemented with the support of State/UT Governments/Local Urban Bodies, Voluntary Organizations, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), institutions and others.

Beggars In India:
1. According to the Census 2011 total number of beggars in India is 4,13,670 (including 2,21,673 males and 1,91,997 females) and the number has increased from the last census.
2. West Bengal tops the chart followed by Uttar Pradesh and Bihar at number two and three respectively. Lakshadweep merely has two vagrants according to the 2011 census.
3. Among the union territories, New Delhi had the largest number of beggars 2,187 followed by 121 in Chandigarh.
4. Among the northeastern states, Asam topped the chart with 22,116 beggars, while Mizoram ranked low with 53 beggars.

Insta Curious: Read about The Persons in Destitution (Protection, Care and Rehabilitation) Model Bill, 2016

InstaLinks:

www.insightsonindia.com
3. Directives Principles of State Policy related key facts.


Mains Link:
Discuss why begging should be decriminalised.

2. Domestic workers’ survey kicks off:

Context:
The first All-India Survey on Domestic Workers was recently flagged off.

About the Survey:
The survey is being carried out by the Labour Bureau.

- It is aimed at estimating the number of domestic workers at the national and State levels, those engaged in informal employment, and migrant and non-migrant workers; the proportion of domestic workers who stay at their employers’ homes and those who do not; the wages of such workers; and other socio-economic factors.
- The survey would also include details of the number of households with “live-in and live-out” domestic workers and the average number of workers engaged by various kinds of households.

Draft National Policy on domestic workers:
A draft National Policy on domestic workers is under consideration of the Central Government. The policy, if finalised, will benefit 50 lakh domestic workers in the country including maids and drivers amongst others.

Salient features of the policy:
1. Inclusion of Domestic Workers in the existing legislations.
2. Domestic workers will have the right to register as workers. Such registration will facilitate their access to rights & benefits accruing to them as workers.
3. Right to form their own associations, trade unions.
4. Right to have minimum wages, access to social security, protection from abuse, harassment, violence.
5. Right to enhance their professional skills.
6. Protection of Domestic Workers from abuse and exploitation.
7. Domestic Workers to have access to courts, tribunals, etc.
8. Establishment of a mechanism for regulation of concerned placement agencies.

Measures already being taken:
- The Central Government has enacted the Unorganized Workers’ Social Security Act, 2008 for providing social security to all unorganized workers including domestic workers.
- Social security schemes like National Old Age Pension Scheme (Ministry of Rural Development); National Family Benefit Scheme (Ministry of Rural Development); Janani Suraksha Yojana (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare), Ayushman Bharat (Ministry of Health and Family Welfare).
- Aam Aadmi Bima Yojana (AABY) with Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY) and Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY) provide life and disability coverage to the unorganised workers for the age group of 18 to 50 years depending upon their eligibility.
- Domestic Workers Sector Skills Council has been established under the Ministry of Skills Development to enable professionalization of domestic workers and enable their career progression.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About the All India survey on domestic workers.
2. Schemes related to their welfare.
3. About the draft policy on domestic workers.

Mains Link:
Discuss the need for a policy on domestic workers.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GT697EK60.1&imageview=0.
Topics: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

1. Dengue fever:

Context:
Dengue cases in Punjab have reached 16,129 — an all-time high figure since 2016.

When do cases peak?
The disease has a seasonal pattern, i.e., the peak comes after monsoon and it is not uniformly distributed throughout the year. Every year, from July to November, an upsurge in cases of dengue has been observed.

What is the major reason for the outbreak of dengue in the state?
Source reduction of mosquito breeding sites and adult control measures are grossly inadequate like Indoor Space Spray and fogging are not carried out in routine. When dengue is reported, measures to control in that area are ignored.

The rate of spread of dengue in Delhi is rampant, with the total number of cases reported in just the first week of November being 1,171. The number of dengue cases reported in the national capital in the month of October was 1,196.

Measures undertaken:
The spike in dengue, malaria and chikungunya cases across Delhi is leading the local bodies and authorities to increase their fogging and spraying drives. The citizens are also being directed to make sure that there is no stagnant water collected near or inside their houses, as it provides a breeding space for the disease.

About Dengue:
- Dengue virus is transmitted through the bite of a female Aedes (Ae.) mosquito.
- Aedes is a day time feeder and can fly up to a limited distance of 400 meters.
- Although it usually results in mild illness, severe dengue infections can sometimes prove fatal.
- World Health Organization (WHO) estimates suggest an annual incidence of 100-400 million dengue infections every year, with its global incidence growing dramatically “in recent decades”.

Status of Dengue:
- Incidence of dengue has grown dramatically around the world in recent decades, with a vast majority of cases under-reported, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).
- WHO estimates 39 crore dengue virus infections per year, of which 9.6 crore show symptoms.
- India registered over 1 lakh dengue cases in 2018 and over 1.5 lakh cases in 2019, according to the National Vector-Borne Disease Control Programme (NVBDCP).

Controlling Dengue Using Bacteria:
Recently researchers from the World Mosquito Program have used mosquitoes infected with Wolbachia bacteria to successfully control dengue in Indonesia.
The scientists infected some mosquitoes with Wolbachia and then released them in the city where they bred with local mosquitoes, until nearly all mosquitoes in the area were carrying Wolbachia bacteria. This is called the Population Replacement Strategy.

At the end of 27 months, the researchers found that the incidence of dengue was 77% lower in areas where Wolbachia-infected mosquitoes had been released, as compared to areas without such deployments.

**Insta Curious:** Did you know that dengue mosquitoes can’t breed once the temperature falls below 16 degrees?

Have you heard about the “Wolbachia method”, which could be used to significantly reduce the incidence of dengue fever? Reference: read [this](https://www.google.com/amp/s/indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-dengue-fever-how-it-spreads-and-how-it-can-be-controlled-7599829/lite/).

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**

1. Dengue- causes, symptoms and spread.
2. The “Wolbachia method” is related to?
3. Where was this method tested recently?
4. About the World Mosquito Program (WMP).

**Mains Link:** Write a note on the “Wolbachia method”, which was in news recently.


### 2. Covaxin gets WHO nod for emergency use:

**Context:**

The [World Health Organization (WHO)](https://www.who.int) has given pre-qualification, or Emergency Use Listing (EUL) for Bharat Biotech’s Covaxin vaccine.

**Please note that:**

- The approval has been given by the Technical Advisory Group (TAG), an independent advisory panel of the WHO.
- The approval was expected on October 26, but the WHO had deferred its decision and sought additional clarifications from Bharat Biotech to conduct a final risk-benefit assessment.
- The WHO has already approved six vaccines for emergency use: AstraZeneca’s Covishield, Moderna’s mRNA-1273, Sinopharm’s BBIBP-CorV, Sinovac’s CoronaVac, Pfizer/BioNTech’s Comirnaty, and Johnson & Johnson’s vaccine.

**What does this approval mean?**

- It has been granted EUL for use in persons 18 years and above, over two doses spaced four weeks apart.
- However, no recommendation has been made for use in children, and available data for use on pregnant women is insufficient to assess safety or efficacy.
- The move is expected to ease international travel for Indians who have opted for the vaccine but experts say that this would be subjected to countries clearing Covaxin through their regulatory processes.

**How effective is COVAXIN?**

Covaxin was found to have 78% efficacy against Covid-19 of any severity, 14 or more days after the second dose, and is extremely suitable for low- and middle-income countries due to easy storage requirements.

**About COVAXIN:**
Covaxin is a whole virion-inactivated vaccine against SARS-CoV-2, developed in partnership with the Indian Council of Medical Research and the National Institute of Virology, Pune.

What is emergency use approval?
The EUL is a prerequisite for the COVAX initiative in vaccine supply, and allows countries to expedite their own regulatory approval to import and administer COVID-19 vaccines.
- It is a risk-based procedure for assessing and listing unlicensed vaccines, therapeutics and in vitro diagnostics with the ultimate aim of expediting the availability of these products to people affected by a public health emergency.

To be eligible, the following criteria must be met:
1. The disease for which the product is intended is serious or immediately life threatening, has the potential of causing an outbreak, epidemic or pandemic and it is reasonable to consider the product for an EUL assessment, e.g., there are no licensed products for the indication or for a critical subpopulation (e.g., children).
2. Existing products have not been successful in eradicating the disease or preventing outbreaks (in the case of vaccines and medicines).
3. The product is manufactured in compliance with current Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) in the case of medicines and vaccines and under a functional Quality Management System (QMS) in the case of IVDs.
4. The applicant undertakes to complete the development of the product (validation and verification of the product in the case of IVDs) and apply for WHO prequalification once the product is licensed.

Insta Curious: What is emergency use authorisation (EUA)? How is it regulated in India? Reference:

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Antigens vs Antibodies.
2. How a vaccine works?
3. Types of vaccines.
4. About DGCI.
5. Procedure to be followed for vaccine approval in India.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G0595E5BF.1&imageview=0.

3. Zika virus:
Context:
With a rise in the number of Zika virus cases in Uttar Pradesh, doctors have advised that people should avoid all non-essential travel to areas reporting cases. Currently close to 90 persons, including 17 children, have tested positive for the virus from the State.

What’s the concern now?
According to information released by the World Health Organisation (WHO), a majority of those infected with Zika virus disease either remain asymptomatic (up to 80%) or show mild symptoms of fever, rash, conjunctivitis, body ache, joint pains.

About Zika:
- The Zika virus is predominantly transmitted by infected mosquitoes from the Aedes genus, mainly Aedes aegypti. The Aedes mosquitoes also spread dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever.
- The virus was first identified in Uganda in 1947 in monkeys.

Transmission:
- Apart from the mosquitoes, an infected person can also spread the virus.

Symptoms:
- Generally, the symptoms include fever, rash, conjunctivitis, muscle and joint pain, malaise, or headache. It lasts for about two to seven days. Most infected people do not develop any symptoms.
- Zika virus infection during pregnancy can cause infants to be born with microcephaly (smaller than normal head size) and other congenital malformations, known as congenital Zika syndrome.
- It has no treatment or vaccine. Instead, the focus is on relieving symptoms and includes rest, rehydration and acetaminophen for fever and pain.

Insta Curious: Did you know that in 2019 transgenic mosquitoes were released in some areas of Brazil? What was the objective of this experiment? Reference:

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About Zika Virus Disease.
2. Spread.
4. Treatment.

4. Norovirus:
Context:
At least 13 people have been found infected with Norovirus in Kerala’s Wayanad district. The state government has asked people to remain vigilant, and stepped up measures to prevent the spread of the virus.

What is Norovirus?
Norovirus is a bug similar to the diarrhoea-inducing rotavirus.
- It is a group of viruses that causes gastrointestinal illness.
- It is the most common pathogen implicated in outbreaks of gastrointestinal disease (inflammation of the stomach and intestines), according to the World Health Organization.

Symptoms:
Initial symptoms of Norovirus are vomiting and/or diarrhoea, which show up one or two days after exposure to the virus.
Patients also feel nauseous, and suffer from abdominal pain, fever, headaches and bodyaches. In extreme cases, loss of fluids could lead to dehydration.

Spread:
- Disease outbreaks typically occur aboard cruise ships, in nursing homes, dormitories, and other closed spaces.
- Norovirus is highly contagious, and can be transmitted through contaminated food, water, and surfaces. The primary route is oral-faecal. One may get infected multiple times as the virus has different strains.
- Norovirus is resistant to many disinfectants and can heat up to 60°C. Therefore, merely steaming food or chlorinating water does not kill the virus. The virus can also survive many common hand sanitisers.

What is the treatment for Norovirus?
The disease is self-limiting — the infection, even though it takes a lot out of the patient, normally lasts only two or three days, and most individuals who are not very young, very old, or malnourished can ride it out with sufficient rest and hydration.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. About Norovirus.
2. The disease.
4. Symptoms.
5. Causes.
6. Treatment.

Mains Link:
Write a note on Norovirus.

5. World Bank’s STARS project:

Context:
Performance of World Bank aided project STARS was reviewed recently.

What is it?
STARS stands for Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States Program (STARS).
STARS project would be implemented as a new Centrally Sponsored Scheme under the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education.
It is a project to improve the quality and governance of school education in six Indian states.
- Six states are- Himachal Pradesh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Rajasthan.
- Some 250 million students (between the age of 6 and 17) in 1.5 million schools, and over 10 million teachers will benefit from the program.

Reform initiatives under the project include:
1. Focusing more directly on the delivery of education services at the state, district and sub district levels by providing customized local-level solutions towards school improvement.
2. Addressing demands from stakeholders, especially parents, for greater accountability and inclusion by producing better data to assess the quality of learning; giving special attention to students from vulnerable section.
3. Equipping teachers to manage this transformation by recognizing that teachers are central to achieving better learning outcomes.
4. Investing more in developing India’s human capital needs by strengthening foundational learning for children in classes 1 to 3 and preparing them with the cognitive, socio-behavioural and language skills to meet future labour market needs.

Unique components of the project:
Contingency Emergency Response Component (CERC):
The project includes a Contingency Emergency Response Component (CERC) under the National Component which would enable it to be more responsive to any natural, man-made and health disasters.

- It will help the government respond to situations leading to loss of learning such as school closures/infrastructure damage, inadequate facilities and use technology for facilitating remote learning etc.
- The CERC component would facilitate the rapid re-categorization of financing and the utilization of streamlined financing request procedures.

**PARAKH:**
A major component of the project is the establishment of PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development) as a National Assessment Centre.

- Included in the National Education Policy 2020, this autonomous institution under the Union Education Ministry will set norms for student assessment and evaluation for all school boards across the country, most of which currently follow norms set by State governments.
- It will also guide standardised testing to monitor learning outcomes at the State and national levels, according to the NEP.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. States covered under the STARS project.
3. Institutions of World Bank.

**Mains Link:**
5. What is open data initiative?
6. What is PARAKH?

**6. NFHS Survey:**

**Context:**
The National Family and Health Survey (NFHS)-5, the most comprehensive survey on socio-economic and health indicators in the country, has been released.

- The previous four rounds of the NFHS were conducted in 1992-93, 1998-99, 2005-06 and 2015-16.

**Highlights of the Report:**

**Women outnumber men, fertility has decreased, and India is getting older:** There were 1,020 women for 1000 men in the country in 2019-2021. This is the highest sex ratio for any NFHS survey as well as since the first modern synchronous census conducted in 1881.

The Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has also come down below the threshold at which the population is expected to replace itself from one generation to next. TFR was 2 in 2019-2021, just below the replacement fertility rate of 2.1.

**Children’s nutrition improved but at a slower pace:** The share of stunted (low height for age), wasted (low weight for height), and underweight (low weight for age) children have all come down since the last NFHS conducted in 2015-16. However, the share of severely wasted children has not, nor has the share of overweight (high weight for height) or anaemic children.

**India might be food secure, but nutrition is a problem for adults too:** Though India might have achieved food security, 60% of Indians cannot afford nutritious diets.

**About NFHS survey:**
NFHS is a large-scale, multi-round survey conducted in a representative sample of households throughout India.
• All NFHSs have been conducted under the stewardship of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India, with the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS) Mumbai, serving as the nodal agency.

NFHS-5 includes some new focal areas, such as death registration, pre-school education, expanded domains of child immunisation, components of micro-nutrients to children, menstrual hygiene, expanded age ranges for measuring hypertension and diabetes among all aged 15 years and above, which will give requisite input for strengthening existing programmes and evolving new strategies for policy intervention.

Every National Family Health Survey (NFHS) has two specific goals to fulfill. They are:
1. To provide essential data needed by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare and other agencies for informed decision making and policy and programme intervention purposes.
2. To provide insight regarding important emerging health and family welfare issues.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About NFHS.
2. About TFR.
3. What is Anaemia?
4. NFHS- 5 findings.

Mains Link: Discuss about the concerns highlighted by NFHS 5 on Child Health in India.


7. African swine fever:
Context:

African Swine Fever (ASF) is spreading widely in Vietnam and is hurting the local farming industry, forcing the culling of three times the number of hogs culled last year.
• The outbreak has this year spread to 2,275 areas, in 57 out of the country’s 63 cities and provinces, the government said, adding that the authorities have so far this year culled 230,000 hogs.

About African Swine Fever (ASF):
• ASF is a highly contagious and fatal animal disease that infects domestic and wild pigs, typically resulting in an acute form of hemorrhagic fever.
• It was first detected in Africa in the 1920s.
• The mortality is close to 100 per cent, and since the fever has no cure, the only way to stop it spreading is by culling the animals.
• As of now, there is no approved vaccine, which is also a reason why animals are culled to prevent the spread of infection.

Insta Curious:
Do you know the differences between African Swine fever and Classical swine fever? Read here.
3. Where was it first discovered?
4. Which countries have been affected by this in 2020?
5. Is there any vaccine available against this?

Mains Link: Write a note African Swine Fever, symptoms and its spread.

8. Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana:
Context:
Summary findings from the fifth edition of the National Family Health Survey, released recently showed a 12.3 percentage point increase over the previous edition of the survey in the coverage of health insurance to 41% of households surveyed, an indication of the impact of the government’s flagship the Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY), that was launched in September 2018.

Key Features of PM-JAY:
1. The world’s largest health insurance/ assurance scheme fully financed by the government.
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.
5. The National Health Authority (NHA) is the nodal agency responsible for the nationwide roll-out and implementation of the AB-PMJAY scheme.
6. This scheme is a Centrally sponsored scheme with some Central sector components.

Eligibility:
1. No restrictions on family size, age or gender.
2. All pre–existing conditions are covered from day one.
3. Covers up to 3 days of pre-hospitalization and 15 days post-hospitalization expenses such as diagnostics and medicines.
4. Benefits of the scheme are portable across the country.
5. 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.
6. Public hospitals are reimbursed for the healthcare services at par with the private hospitals.

As per the latest economic survey:
1. The Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY) contributed to improvement in many health outcomes in States that implemented the programme.
2. States that joined the PM-JAY, compared to those that did not, experienced greater penetration of health insurance, reduction in infant and child mortality rates, realised improved access and utilisation of family planning services and greater awareness of HIV/AIDS.
3. Across all the States, the proportion of households with health insurance increased by 54% for States that implemented PM-JAY while falling by 10% in States that did not.

Insta Curious: Did you know that the National Health Authority has also been given the responsibility to implement the National Digital Health Mission? Reference:

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.

9. Omicron - a new variant:
Context:
The new variant **B 1.1. 529**, which was designated as a ‘Variant of Concern’ by World Health Organisation has been assigned the name **Omicron**.

- Reported by public health officials of South Africa, the new variant has triggered a lot of concern worldwide over a probable resurgence of Covid infections.

**How different it is from the original virus?**
The B1.1.529 has more than 2 times the number of bad spike mutations than the Delta variant. The new variant has an extremely high 32 worrisome mutations in the spike protein, which is a real concern than the Delta variant.

**The WHO currently lists 5 variants of concern:**
1. Omicron (B.1.1.529), identified in southern Africa in November 2021.
2. Delta (B.1.617.2), which emerged in India in late 2020 and spread around the world.
3. Gamma (P.1), which emerged in Brazil in late 2020.
5. Alpha (B.1.1.7), which emerged in Britain in late 2020.

**VARIANTS OF INTEREST** - There are currently two:
1. Mu (B.1.621), which emerged in Colombia in early 2021.
2. Lambda (C.37), which emerged in Peru in late 2020.

**Variant of Interest (VOI) and Variant of Concern (VOC):**
A SARS-CoV-2 VOI is a SARS-CoV-2 variant:
1. with genetic changes that are predicted or known to affect virus characteristics such as transmissibility, disease severity, immune escape, diagnostic or therapeutic escape; AND
2. that has been identified as causing significant community transmission or multiple COVID-19 clusters, in multiple countries with increasing relative prevalence alongside increasing number of cases over time, or other apparent epidemiological impacts to suggest an emerging risk to global public health.

A SARS-CoV-2 VOC is a SARS-CoV-2 variant that meets the definition of a VOI and, through a comparative assessment, has been demonstrated to be associated with one or more of the following changes at a degree of global public health significance:
1. increase in transmissibility or detrimental change in COVID-19 epidemiology; OR
2. increase in virulence or change in clinical disease presentation; OR
3. decrease in effectiveness of public health and social measures or available diagnostics, vaccines, therapeutics.

**How do variants of a virus emerge and why?**
- Variants of a virus have one or more mutations that differentiate it from the other variants that are in circulation.
- Essentially, the goal of the virus is to reach a stage where it can cohabitate with humans because it needs a host to survive.
- Errors in the viral RNA are called mutations, and viruses with these mutations are called variants. Variants could differ by a single or many mutations.

**InstaLinks:**
**Prelims Link:**
1. Variants of Coronavirus.
2. What is Variant of interest (VOI)?
3. What is Variant of Concern (VOC)?
4. What is Mutation?

**Mains Link:**
Discuss the concerns associated with mutations of Covid-19 virus.

Topics: Role of civil services in a democracy.

1. ‘Lateral entry’ into bureaucracy: reason, process, and the controversy:

Context:
The recent recommendation of 31 candidates by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) to be inducted into senior and mid-level positions in various union ministries is the second such attempt towards bringing specialists from private sector in the senior and middle level of bureaucracy. Earlier too, nine lateral entrants from private sector were inducted in 2019.

What’s the issue highlighted by experts?
Experts have warned about the procedure of recruitment. They say, meritocracy demands that the recruitment procedure of selecting professionals should stand the test of merit through a fair and transparent procedure.

- The fair selection and appointment of civil servants is the foundation of modern merit-based bureaucracy.

Therefore, any deviation from the established procedure must also fulfil the conditions of fair procedure of recruitment.

Need of the hour:

- To be constitutionally correct and to increase the legitimacy of the move, the recruitment procedure of induction of lateral candidates should be initiated in the parliament.
- A comprehensive legislative process will not only help usher in clarity over various aspects of lateral entry recruitment but also legitimise the process and provide it with the endorsement of wider political forces.

What is ‘lateral entry’ into government?
- Recommended by NITI Aayog, in its three-year Action Agenda.
- The induction of personnel will take place at the middle and senior management levels in the central government.
- These ‘lateral entrants’ would be part of the central secretariat which in the normal course has only career bureaucrats from the All India Services/ Central Civil Services.

Need for and significance:
1. Lateral entrants have specialised knowledge and expertise in the domain area.
2. Meets the twin objectives of bringing in fresh talent as well as augment the availability of manpower.
3. It provides stakeholders such as the private sector and non-profits an opportunity to participate in governance process.
4. It will help in bringing change in organisation culture in Government sector culture.

Why is lateral entry sometimes criticised?

- There is no reservation in these appointments.
- They are seen as back doors for a political party to bring its own people openly.

Insta Curious:
Did you know that under Article 321, Parliament can hand over additional functions to the UPSC?

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
- Overview of Articles 309 to 312.

Mains Link:
Discuss the pros and cons of lateral entry into civil services.

2. Authoritarianism is on the rise, says report:

Context:
The Global State of Democracy Report, 2021 was recently released by the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance.

- The reports refer to three main regime types: democracies, hybrid and authoritarian regimes. Hybrid and authoritarian regimes are both classified as non-democratic.

Highlights of the Report:
- The number of countries moving towards authoritarianism in 2020 was higher than that of countries going in the other direction, towards democracy. 20 countries moved in the direction of authoritarianism, seven countries moved towards democracy.
- The pandemic has prolonged this existing negative trend into a five-year stretch, the longest such period since the start of the third wave of democratisation in the 1970s.
- Democratically elected Governments, including established democracies, are increasingly adopting authoritarian tactics.

Performance analysis of various studies:
- The report highlighted the case of Brazil and India as “some of the most worrying examples of backsliding”. However, India remained in the category of a mid-level performing democracy as it has since 2000.
- The United States and three members of the European Union [Hungary, Poland and Slovenia] have also seen concerning democratic declines.

About the Report:
- The Global State of Democracy 2021 reviews the state of democracy around the world over the course of 2020 and 2021, with democratic trends since 2015 used as contextual reference.
- It is based on analysis of events that have impacted democratic governance globally since the start of the pandemic, based on various data sources, including International IDEA’s Global Monitor of Covid-19’s Impact on Democracy and Human Rights, and International IDEA’s Global State of Democracy (GSoD) Indices.
- The GSoD Indices provide quantitative data on democratic quality for the same countries, based on 28 aspects of democracy up until the end of 2020.

What is democracy?
The report defines democracy as based on five core attributes: Representative Government, Fundamental Rights, Checks on Government, Impartial Administration and Participatory Engagement. These five attributes provide the organizing structure for this report.

Insta Curious:
Have you heard about the annual democracy report? Reference: read [this](#).

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link: 1. Highlights of the report. 2. Performance of India and other countries.

Mains Link: Comment on India’s performance in the latest democracy index.

www.insightsonindia.com 71 InsightsIAS
Topics: India and its neighbourhood - relations.

1. China-Taiwan relations:

Context:
The European Parliament's first official delegation to Taiwan has come in support of Taiwan and said that the diplomatically isolated island is not alone. It called for bolder actions to strengthen EU-Taiwan ties as Taipei faces rising pressure from Beijing.

Need for:
Taiwan, which does not have formal diplomatic ties with any European nations except tiny Vatican City, is keen to deepen relations with members of the European Union.
- Also, China has ramped up military pressure, including repeated missions by Chinese warplanes near democratic Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its own and has not ruled out taking by force.

China-Taiwan relations - Background:
China has claimed Taiwan through its "one China" policy since the Chinese civil war forced the defeated Kuomintang, or Nationalist, to flee to the island in 1949 and has vowed to bring it under Beijing’s rule, by force if necessary.
- While Taiwan is self-governed and de facto independent, it has never formally declared independence from the mainland.
- Under the “one country, two systems” formula, Taiwan would have the right to run its own affairs; a similar arrangement is used in Hong Kong.

Presently, Taiwan is claimed by China, which refuses diplomatic relations with countries that recognise the region.

Indo-Taiwan relations:
- Although they do not have formal diplomatic ties, Taiwan and India have been cooperating in various fields.
- India has refused to endorse the “one-China” policy since 2010.

Insta Curious: Did you know that to this date, Taiwan is not a part of the WHO owing to objections from China? Read this to know more about the issue.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Location of Taiwan and its historical background.
2. Regions being administered by China under One China policy.
3. Is Taiwan represented at WHO and the United Nations?
4. Countries in the South China Sea.
5. Qing dynasty.

Mains Link:
Write a note on India-Taiwan bilateral relations.

2. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC):

Context:
The CPEC or the China Pakistan Economic Corridor is getting increasingly unmanageable with local Pakistanis unhappy with the Chinese soldiers and civilians working on the project. Therefore, Pakistan has been forced to deploy more soldiers in the area.
- For the security of Chinese engineers and others working in the Bhasha Dam, the Pakistan Army has deployed 340 Infantry Brigade of the 34 Special Security Division. Pakistan was forced to raise this and another division for the CPEC's security.
About CPEC:
Launched in 2015, 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?
3. Battle of Rezang La:
Context:
November 18 marks the 59th anniversary of the Battle of Rezang La. A memorial was inaugurated on the occasion.

Where is Rezang La?
Rezang La is a mountain pass on the Line of Actual Control in Ladakh. It is located between village of Chushul and the Spanggur Lake that stretches across both Indian and Chinese territories. It had also been the site of a heroic battle on 18 November 1962.

About the battle:
- Troops from the 13 Kumaon Regiment defeated several waves of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army in 1962.
- Despite being heavily outnumbered, soldiers of the regiment fought to the last man standing, under freezing temperatures, and with limited ammunition.

Significance of the region:
Rezang La is vital for the defence of the crucially important Chushul. Any invader reaching there would have had a free run to Leh.

Insta Curious: All you need to know about the Indo-China border dispute: read this.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About the Battle of Rezang La.
2. What is LoC and how is it established, geographical extent and significance?
3. What is LAC?
4. Where is Nathu La?
5. Where is Pangong Tso?
6. Who administers Akashi Chin?
Mains Link:
Discuss the significance of Rezang La for India.
Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GEA96VKMR.1&imageview=0.

4. Chinese firms eye Afghanistan's lithium:
Context:
A number of Chinese companies have already begun “on-site inspections” of possible projects to tap lithium deposits in Afghanistan, having received the green light to do so from the Taliban regime.

Background:
Lithium is one of many resources in Afghanistan present in large deposits but as yet untapped, largely because of years of political instability and the lack of infrastructure.

Challenges ahead:
The security situation, not to mention a dire economic crisis including food shortages, are among the many challenges.

About Lithium:
It is a soft, silvery-white metal. Under standard conditions, it is the lightest metal and the lightest solid element. It is highly reactive and flammable, and must be stored in mineral oil. It is an alkali metal and a rare metal.

Key Characteristics and Properties:
- It has the highest specific heat capacity of any solid element.
- Lithium’s single balance electron allows it to be a good conductor of electricity.
- It is flammable and can even explode when exposed to air and water.
Uses:
1. Lithium is a key element for new technologies and finds its use in ceramics, glass, telecommunication and aerospace industries.
2. The well-known uses of Lithium are in Lithium ion batteries, lubricating grease, high energy additive to rocket propellants, optical modulators for mobile phones and as convertor to tritium used as a raw material for thermonuclear reactions i.e. fusion.

Prescribed substance:
The thermonuclear application makes Lithium as “Prescribed substance” under the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 which permits AMD for exploration of Lithium in various geological domains of the country.
- Under the Atomic Energy Act, 1962, “Prescribed Substance” means any substance including any mineral which the Central Government may, by notification, prescribe, being a substance which in its opinion is or may be used for the production or use of atomic energy or research into matters connected therewith and includes uranium, plutonium, thorium, beryllium, deuterium or any of their respective derivatives or compounds or any other materials containing any of the aforesaid substances.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About Lithium.
2. Properties.
3. Uses.
4. Lithium reserves in India.
5. Lithium reserves across the world.

Mains Link:
Discuss the advantages of lithium ion batteries.

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

1. Istanbul Convention on violence against women:
Context:
Every year, men in Turkey murder hundreds of women, and trending hashtags on social media and protests on the street have become sadly familiar. This month, a particularly brazen killing has triggered a massive outcry over what women’s rights activists say is the government’s failure to prevent gender-based violence.
- Activists say that by withdrawing from Istanbul Convention, a 2011 landmark agreement of the Council of Europe outlining how to ensure the safety of women, Turkey has given up on a roadmap it was the first country to endorse.

Background:
On November 24, 2011, Turkey became the first country to ratify the Istanbul convention and, on March 8, 2012, it incorporated the Istanbul Convention into domestic law.

Why it's withdrawal being criticised?
Turkey has received severe criticism from various quarters and has led to protests across the country.
1. The country has withdrawn from the convention despite the alarmingly high rates of violence and femicide in the country.
2. The country ranks 133 out of 156 countries in the Global Gender Gap report 2021.
3. According to UN women data, 38 per cent of women in Turkey face violence from a partner in their lifetime.
4. The Turkish government does not maintain any official records on femicides.
What are the reasons for Turkey’s withdrawal?
● It said the convention demeans traditional family structure, promotes divorces and encourages acceptance of LGBTQ in the society.
● Besides, it said, it has enough local laws to protect women’s rights.

Concerns:
1. The move comes at a time when domestic violence against women and girls has intensified across the world amidst the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. People are also concerned that now even basic rights and protections of the Turkish women will come under threat.

What is the Istanbul Convention?
It is also called as the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.
The treaty is the world’s first binding instrument to prevent and tackle violence against women.
● It is the most comprehensive legal framework that exists to tackle violence against women and girls, covering domestic violence, rape, sexual assault, female genital mutilation (FGM), so-called honour-based violence, and forced marriage.
When a government ratifies the Convention, they are legally bound to follow it.
● The convention was adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on 7 April 2011.
● The Convention sets minimum standards for governments to meet when tackling violence against women.

Insta Curious:
Do you also know about the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), adopted in 1979 by the UN General Assembly? Is India a party to this convention? Read this article.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link: 5. Recently, which country decided to exit the convention?
1. Istanbul- location.
2. Istanbul convention is related to?
3. When was it signed?
4. First country to sign the convention? Mains Link:

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

1. Palestinian PM calls for Indian support:
Context:
Indian and Palestinian Prime Ministers held meetings in Glasgow recently on the sidelines of the COP26 summit.

Outcomes of the meet:
● Palestine asked India to play a stabilising role in West Asia by maintaining cooperation with “all related parties”.
● It said, India had a historic tradition of supporting the rights of the Palestinian people and its technical support should be “parallel to the political support”.
● India should support the Palestinian people’s right to self-determination and the establishment of an independent State of Palestine.

Why is India’s support significant?
India is serving as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for 2021-22 and was re-elected to the Human Rights Council for the 2022-24.”
Also, in recent years, India has broken the tradition of supporting Palestine at the U.N.
1. In 2019, India voted in favour of Israel at the ECOSOC (Economic and Social Council) to deny observer status to a Palestinian organisation named Shahed.

2. In June, India abstained during the voting on a resolution calling for investigation into Israeli actions in the Gaza Strip at the Human Rights Council which drew strong protest from Foreign Minister Riyad Al Malki who wrote a letter critical of India’s abstention.

India-Palestine:
India’s support for the Palestinian cause is an integral part of the nation’s foreign policy. In 1974, India became the first Non-Arab State to recognize Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) as the sole and legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.
- India’s position on Palestine is independent and consistent. It is shaped by independent views and interests, and not determined by any third country.

Israel-Palestine conflict- Historical Background:
- The conflict has been ongoing for more than 100 years between Jews and Arabs over a piece of land between Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.
- It was between 1882 to 1948, when the Jews from around the world gathered in Palestine. This movement came to be known as Aliyahs.
- Then in 1917, Ottoman Empire fell after World War 1 and the UK got control over Palestine.
- The land was inhabited by a Jewish minority and Arab majority.
- The Balfour Declaration was issued after Britain gained control with the aim of establishing a home for the Jews in Palestine. However during that period the Arabs were in majority in Palestine.
- Jews favored the idea while the Palestinians rejected it. Almost 6 million Jews lost their lives in the Holocaust which also ignited further demand of a separate Jewish state.
- Jews claimed Palestine to be their natural home while the Arabs too did not leave the land and claimed it.
- The international community supported the Jews.
- In 1947, the UN voted for Palestine to be split into separate Jewish and Arab states, with Jerusalem becoming an international city.
- That plan was accepted by Jewish leaders but rejected by the Arab side and never implemented.

Way ahead:
The trend is clear – India’s decisions are based on a mature understanding and evaluation of the Israel-Palestine issues and New Delhi is following the same approach now as Israel and Palestine exchange rocket fire. India has refused to pick a side and called for de-escalation and dialogue.

Insta Curious: Do you know where the Gaza Strip is? Why is it a disputed area? Reference: read this.
Do you know about the Oslo Accords? Reference: read this.

InstaLinks:
Prelims link:
1. What is Israel-Palestine issue?
2. Contested boundaries between the two
3. West bank settlement issue
4. Stand taken by UN, Israel, Palestine on this issue
5. Challenges posed by this issue
6. India’s stand.

Mains link:
Discuss about the impact of Israel-Palestine issue on the region and its impact on India’s interests.
Link:
https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GGH95F3R8.1&imageview=0.
2. **Hamas and Gaza Strip:**

**Context:**
Egypt is seeking to reach an agreement on a cease-fire between Israel and the Palestinian resistance group Hamas in Gaza.

**The Agreement includes:**
Long-term cease-fire, a prisoner swap, humanitarian aid to Gaza and reconstruction.

**Who are Hamas?**
- Hamas is a Palestinian Islamist political organization and militant group that has waged war on Israel since the group’s 1987 founding, most notably through suicide bombings and rocket attacks.
- It seeks to replace Israel with a Palestinian state. It also governs Gaza independently of the Palestinian Authority.

**Need for an agreement:**
Gaza has been under a tightened Israeli blockade since 2007 in which most basic goods still enter the region under highly restricted measures.
- In May, an Israeli offensive left nearly 260 Palestinians dead and thousands wounded as well as a vast trail of destruction in Gaza. Palestinian resistance groups responded with rocket barrages into Israeli areas, killing at least 13 Israelis.

**Where is the Gaza Strip?**
The Gaza Strip is an entirely artificial creation that emerged in 1948 when roughly three-fourths of Palestine’s Arab population was displaced, in some cases expelled, during the course of Israel’s creation. And most of the refugees, they were sort of scattered across the region in neighboring countries like Jordan, Syria and Lebanon.
- Some went to the West Bank, which came under Jordanian rule after 1948. And a very large number went to the Gaza Strip, which is this tiny little coastal strip between Egypt and what is now Israel. Today, the population of Gaza, about 70% of Gaza’s population are refugees.

**Who controls it?**
Hamas forcibly took control over the Gaza Strip in 2007. Shortly thereafter, the Israelis imposed a complete closure on Gaza’s borders. They declared Gaza to be an enemy entity. Of course, Gaza is not a state.
- Hamas, of course, is viewed by Israel and by much of the international community as a terrorist organization, including the United States, for their history of attacks on civilians and so forth.

**Present scenario:**
- Israel still occupies the West Bank, and although it pulled out of Gaza the UN still regards that piece of land as part of occupied territory.
- Israel claims the whole of Jerusalem as its capital, while the Palestinians claim East Jerusalem as the capital of a future Palestinian state.
- The US is one of only a handful of countries to recognise Israel's claim to the whole of the city.

**What’s happening now?**
- Tensions are often high between Israel and Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank.
- Gaza is ruled by a Palestinian militant group called Hamas, which has fought Israel many times. Israel and Egypt tightly control Gaza's borders to stop weapons getting to Hamas.
- Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank say they're suffering because of Israeli actions and restrictions. Israel say it is only acting to protect itself from Palestinian violence.
- Things have escalated since the start of the holy Muslim month of Ramadan in mid-April 2021, with nightly clashes between police and Palestinians.
- The threatened eviction of some Palestinian families in East Jerusalem has also caused rising anger.
1. Where is the west bank?
2. Gaza strip.
4. Who are Hamas?
5. What is Al-Nakba?
6. About the conflict.

Mains Link: Suggest solutions to end the long standing Israel- Palestine conflict.

3. Automatic job authorisation for spouses of H-1B visa holders:

Context:
The United States has agreed to provide automatic work authorisation permits to the spouses of H-1B visa holders — a move that is likely to benefit thousands of Indian professionals based in the US.

- As per the latest amendments, while L-1 spouses will be given the extension without applying for it, H-4 visa holders will still have to apply for the extension after their employment permit expires.

Significance of the move:
This policy amendment is likely to be particularly beneficial for Indian women whose spouses hold H-1B or L-1 visas, as they will now be allowed up to 180 days auto extension on work authorization.

Need for:
The American Immigration Lawyers’ Association had filed a class-action lawsuit on behalf of immigrant spouses, many of whom have lost their jobs due to long processing delays for work authorization.

H-4 and L2 visas: What’s the difference?
An H-4 visa is issued to the immediate family members (spouse and children under the age of 21) of H-1B visa holders. Over 94 per cent of H4 visa holders are women, and of these, around 93 per cent are from India.

L-1 visas are non-immigrant visas that are valid for a relatively short time. With this visa, multinationals are able to shift foreign employees to their US offices for specialised positions on a temporary basis. The dependent spouse or unmarried children under 21 years of age of an L-1 visa holder are issued L-2 visas to enter the United States. L2 visa holders can acquire EAD (Employment Authorisation Documents) to find employment.

What are H-1B work visas?
- In 1952, after the US started expanding its presence in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics disciplines, it felt the need to hire quality workers who could help the country achieve innovation in these areas at reasonable costs. The need to hire workers paved way for the introduction of the H-1 work visa system in US.
- This work visa system was further subdivided into H-1B, H-2B, L1, O1, and E1 visas, depending on the qualification required and the area for which workers were sought.
- Of these, the H-1B visa remains the most popular due to the relatively better wage chance it offers.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Differences between H1B, F1 and M1 Visas.
2. Difference between an NRI and an OCI cardholder.
3. When OCI and PIO were merged?
4. The Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 grants citizenship to?
5. Constitutional provisions related to citizenship in India.

Mains Link:
Discuss the impact of recent changes in US visa rules on Indian students in the US.


4. Iran invites the UN nuclear body chief to Tehran for talks:

Context:
Iran has invited the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for talks after the UN official expressed concern over a lack of contact with Iranian authorities.
Previously, the IAEA complained that it had been denied “indispensable” access to a centrifuge component manufacturing workshop where it needed to service equipment.

Need for these measures:
Iran has produced more than 120 kilograms (265 pounds) of 20% enriched uranium, far more than what the U.N. nuclear watchdog had reported.

The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA:
The 2015 deal promises Iran economic incentives in exchange for limits on its nuclear program, and is meant to prevent Tehran from developing a nuclear bomb.

- The U.S. unilaterally pulled out of the deal in 2018 under then-President Donald Trump, but Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia have tried to preserve the accord.
- Under the deal with world powers, the other signatories were to provide Iran with 20% enriched uranium needed for its research reactor.
- Under the terms of the nuclear deal, Iran was prohibited from enriching uranium above 3.67% with the exception of its research reactor activities.

About IAEA:
- Set up as the world’s “Atoms for Peace” organization in 1957 within the United Nations family.
- Reports to both the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council.
- Headquarters in Vienna, Austria.

Functions:
- Works with its Member States and multiple partners worldwide to promote the safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear technologies.
- Seeks to promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy, and to inhibit its use for any military purpose, including nuclear weapons.

Programs:
1. Program of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT).
2. Human Health Program.

Insta Curious: Do you know about India's nuclear triad? Reference: read this.

InstaLinks:
- Prelims Link: What is JCPOA? Signatories. Iran and its neighbours. What is IAEA? Relation with the UN. Members of IAEA. Programs of IAEA.
- Mains Link: Write a note on JCPOA. Board of Governors- composition, voting and functions. What is Uranium Enrichment?

www.insightsonindia.com
80 InsightsIAS
5. **Iran nuclear talks** set to resume after five months:

**Context:**
The international talks in Vienna to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, will take place soon.
- The talks will be held between the remaining partners to the deal — Iran, China, Russia, Germany, France and the U.K.

**About the Iran Nuclear Deal:**
- Also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).
- The JCPOA was the result of prolonged negotiations from 2013 and 2015 between Iran and P5+1 (China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union, or the EU).
- Under the deal, Tehran agreed to significantly cut its stores of centrifuges, enriched uranium and heavy-water, all key components for nuclear weapons.

**What's the concern now?**
- Mr. Trump pulled the U.S. out of the accord in 2018. Besides, he opted for a “maximum pressure” campaign by imposing sanctions and other tough actions.
- Iran responded by intensifying its enrichment of uranium and building of centrifuges, while maintaining its insistence that its nuclear development was for civilian and not military purposes.
Again, in January 2020, following the drone strike on Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps commander Gen. Qasem Soleiman, Iran announced that it would no longer observe the JCPOA’s restraints.
- The collapse of the JCPOA drags Iran towards nuclear brinkmanship, like North Korea, which has created major geopolitical instability in the region and beyond.

**Significance of the deal for India:**
- Removing sanctions may revive India’s interest in the Chabahar port, Bandar Abbas port, and other plans for regional connectivity.
- This would further help India to neutralize the Chinese presence in Gwadar port, Pakistan.
- Restoration of ties between the US and Iran will help India to procure cheap Iranian oil and aid in energy security.

**Insta Curious:** Have you heard about the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)? Is India a member to this treaty? Reference: read this.

**InstaLinks:**
- **Prelims Link:**
  1. What is JCPOA? Signatories.
  2. Iran and its neighbours.
  3. What is IAEA? Relation with the UN.
  4. What is Uranium Enrichment?
- **Mains Link:**
  Write a note on JCPOA.
  **Link:** https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GC1982VJI.1&imageview=0.

6. **Philippines and China- South China Sea Dispute:**

**Context:**
The Philippines will resume a military resupply mission for the country's troops stationed on an atoll (Second Thomas Shoal, locally known as Ayungin Shoal) in the South China Sea will resume this week, after it was aborted last week when it was blocked by Chinese coast guard.
- Philippines was backed by the U.S. State Department, which released a statement calling the Chinese actions an "escalation that directly threatens regional peace and stability, escalates regional tensions, infringes upon freedom of navigation in the South China Sea."

**Significance of the atoll:**
www.insightsonindia.com

81

InsightsIAS
A small contingent of the Philippine Marine Corps has occupied the atoll, since its navy deliberately grounded World War II landing vessel BRP Sierra Madre to serve as an outpost in 1999.

The island is about 105 nautical miles off Palawan in the West Philippine Sea—Manila’s term for the eastern portion of the South China Sea that falls within the Philippine exclusive economic zone (EEZ).

What’s the issue?
Beijing has overlapping territorial claims with several Southeast Asian states in the South China Sea.

- China claims almost all of the resource-rich sea, through which trillions of dollars in shipping trade passes annually, with competing claims from Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam.
- Beijing has also been accused of deploying a range of military hardware, including anti-ship missiles and surface-to-air missiles there, and ignored a 2016 international tribunal decision that declared its historical claim over most of the waters to be without basis.

Where is the South China Sea?
- The South China Sea is an arm of western Pacific Ocean in Southeast Asia.
- It is south of China, east & south of Vietnam, west of the Philippines and north of the island of Borneo.
- It is connected by Taiwan Strait with the East China Sea and by Luzon Strait with the Philippine Sea.
- Bordering states & territories: the People’s Republic of China, the Republic of China (Taiwan), the Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Indonesia, Singapore and Vietnam.

Strategic Importance:
- This sea holds tremendous strategic importance for its location as it is the connecting link between the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Ocean (Strait of Malacca).
- According to the United Nations Conference on Trade And Development (UNCTAD) one-third of the global shipping passes through it, carrying trillions of trade which makes it a significant geopolitical water body.

Contesting Claims Over Islands:
- The Paracel Islands are claimed by China, Taiwan and Vietnam.
- The Spratly Islands are claimed by China, Taiwan, Vietnam, Brunei and Philippines.
- The Scarborough Shoal is claimed by the Philippines, China and Taiwan.

Since 2010, China has been converting uninhabited islets into artificial islets to bring it under UNCLOS (For example, Haven Reef, Johnson South Reef and Fiery Cross Reef).

Insta Curious: Do you know the meaning of the phrase ‘The Seven Seas’? Read Here
Have you given a thought about how seas are names and their associated problems? Read Briefly

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea.
2. Countries involved in the dispute.
3. What is the nine dash line?
4. Disputed islands and their locations.

5. Important straits, passes and seas in the region.
6. What is UNCLOS?
7. Locate Taiwan strait and Luzon Strait.

Mains Link:
Write a note on the South China Sea dispute.

Topics: Important International institutions, agencies and fora, their structure, mandate.

1. G20 Summit:
Context:
2021 G20 Summit was held in Rome, Italy.
Objectives of the summit:
The Group of 20 countries, which represent more than three-quarters of the world’s greenhouse gas emissions, had been looking for common ground and solid commitments on how to reduce emissions while helping poor countries deal with the impact of rising temperatures.

Outcomes of the meet:
1. Leaders committed to the key Paris Agreement goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.
2. They also pledged to reach a target of net zero carbon emissions “by or around mid-century”, instead of setting a clear 2050 date, as campaigners and summit host Italy were hoping for.
3. They agreed to stop funding new dirty coal plants abroad by the end of 2021.
4. They reaffirmed the so far unmet commitment to mobilise $100 billion for developing countries for climate adaptation costs.
5. They approved an agreement that will subject multinationals to a minimum 15 percent tax, as part of an effort to build "a more stable and fairer international tax system".
6. They decided to pursue the recognition of more vaccines by the World Health Organization under a “One Health approach” for the world, and providing finances and technology for vaccine production at “mRNA Hubs” in South Africa, Brazil and Argentina.

What is the G20?
The G20 is an annual meeting of leaders from the countries with the largest and fastest-growing economies.
- Its members account for 85% of the world’s GDP, and two-thirds of its population.
- The G20 Summit is formally known as the “Summit on Financial Markets and the World Economy”.

Establishment:
After the Asian Financial Crisis in 1997-1998, it was acknowledged that the participation of major emerging market countries is needed on discussions on the international financial system, and G7 finance ministers agreed to establish the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting in 1999.

Presidency:
- The group has no permanent staff of its own, so every year in December, a G20 country from a rotating region takes on the presidency.
- That country is then responsible for organising the next summit, as well as smaller meetings for the coming year.
- They can also choose to invite non-member countries along as guests.
- The first G20 meeting took place in Berlin in 1999, after a financial crisis in East Asia affected many countries around the world.

Full membership of the G20:
Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, South Korea, Turkey, the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union.

Its relevance in changing times:
- As globalization progresses and various issues become more intricately intertwined, the recent G20 summits have focused not only on macroeconomy and trade, but also on a wide range of global issues which have an immense impact on the global economy, such as development, climate change and energy, health, counter-terrorism, as well as migration and refugees.
- The G20 has sought to realize an inclusive and sustainable world through its contributions towards resolving these global issues.

Insta Links:

**Prelims Link:**
1. G20 vs G20+ vs G7 vs G8.
2. Objectives and sub-groups.
3. Overview of Geographical locations of the member countries.

**Mains Link:**
Do you think the recent G20 summits have turned into talking shops rather than getting down to brass tacks? Critically analyse.

**Link:**

## 2. UNESCO creative cities network (UCCN):

**Context:**
The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has picked Srinagar among 49 cities as part of the creative city network under the Crafts and Folk Arts category.

- The inclusion of Srinagar in the creative city network for the arts and crafts has paved a way for the city to represent its handicrafts on the global stage through UNESCO.

### About Creative Cities Network:
The UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was created in 2004 to promote cooperation with and among cities that have identified creativity as a strategic factor for sustainable urban development.

**Objective:** placing creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level.

**The Network covers seven creative fields:** Crafts and Folk Arts, Media Arts, Film, Design, Gastronomy, Literature and Music.

Joining the Network, cities commit to sharing their best practices and developing partnerships involving the public and private sectors as well as civil society in order to:
1. Strengthen the creation, production, distribution and dissemination of cultural activities, goods and services;
2. Develop hubs of creativity and innovation and broaden opportunities for creators and professionals in the cultural sector;
3. Improve access to and participation in cultural life, in particular for marginalized or vulnerable groups and individuals;
4. Fully integrate culture and creativity into sustainable development plans.

As of November, 2019, there are five Indian cities in UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) as follows:

Insta Curious: Did you know that the United Nations General Assembly has designated the 31st of October as World Cities Day? Reference: read [this](https://www.thehindu.com/).
What is UNAMA?
- UNAMA was established on 28 March 2002 by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1401.
- It was basically established to assist the state and the people of Afghanistan in laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development.
- Its original mandate was to support the implementation of the Bonn Agreement (December 2001).
- Reviewed annually, this mandate has been altered over time to reflect the needs of the country.
- UNAMA is an integrated mission. This means that the Special Political Mission, all UN agencies, funds and programmes, work in a multidimensional and integrated manner to better assist Afghanistan according to nationally defined priorities.

What is the Bonn Agreement?
- Bonn was a closed-door negotiation; participants were isolated, outside contact was limited during the negotiations, and there was no publicity until after the agreement was signed.
- The existing nominal head of state (Rabbani) was sidelined and did not participate, and the Taliban were completely excluded from the Bonn negotiations.
- The United Nations and several other international actors played major roles in pushing the negotiations forward, and the Bonn Agreement was blessed by the U.N. Security Council.

The Bonn Agreement set an ambitious three-year political and administrative roadmap which was, by and large, followed:
- The Emergency Loya Jirga (grand council) of June 2002 established the transitional administration, a new Constitution was ratified in early 2004, and presidential and parliamentary elections were held in 2004 and 2005.

What are UN special political missions?
The term ‘Special Political Mission’ encompasses entities that are not managed or directed by the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA) such as the Office of the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide.

Insta Curious: What is Sharia law? How are rulings made? Reference:

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. About UNAMA.
2. What are UN Special Missions.
3. What is Bonn Agreement?

Mains Link:
Comment on Afghan Crisis.

4. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC):

Context:
New Zealand is hosting this year’s Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.
- Continued outbreaks of the coronavirus and related travel restrictions have confined the meeting to the virtual realm for a second straight year.
- As usual, the 21 APEC members will be seeking areas where members can cooperate on easing barriers to trade and economic growth instead of trying to settle longstanding feuds.

APEC:
It is a regional economic forum established in 1989 to leverage the growing interdependence of the Asia-Pacific.

Aim: to create greater prosperity for the people of the region by promoting balanced, inclusive, sustainable, innovative and secure growth and by accelerating regional economic integration.

Functions:
1. APEC works to help all residents of the Asia-Pacific participate in the growing economy. APEC projects provide digital skills training for rural communities and help indigenous women export their products abroad.
2. Recognizing the impacts of climate change, APEC members also implement initiatives to increase energy efficiency and promote sustainable management of forest and marine resources.

3. The forum adapts to allow members to deal with important new challenges to the region’s economic well-being. This includes ensuring disaster resilience, planning for pandemics, and addressing terrorism.

Members:
APEC’s 21 member economies are Australia; Brunei Darussalam; Canada; Chile; People’s Republic of China; Hong Kong, China; Indonesia; Japan; Republic of Korea; Malaysia; Mexico; New Zealand; Papua New Guinea; Peru; The Philippines; The Russian Federation; Singapore; Chinese Taipei; Thailand; United States of America; Viet Nam.

Significance:
In all, APEC members account for nearly 3 billion people and about 60% of the world’s GDP. They span the Pacific rim, from Chile to Russia to Thailand to Australia.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Geographical locations of APEC members.
2. Regional groups to which India is not a member.

5. New Pak. law allows Jadhav to file appeal:

Context:
Pakistan’s Parliament has enacted a law to give Indian death-row prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav the right to file a review appeal against his conviction by a military court.

Background:
Mr. Jadhav, a 51-year-old retired Indian Navy officer, was sentenced to death by a Pakistani military court on charges of espionage and terrorism in April 2017.

Developments so far:
- India approached the ICJ against Pakistan for denial of consular access (Vienna Convention) to Jadhav and challenging the death sentence. After hearing both sides, The Hague-based ICJ issued a verdict in July 2019, asking Pakistan to give India consular access to Mr. Jadhav and also ensure review of his conviction.
- It also ruled that Pakistan must undertake an “effective review and reconsideration” of the conviction and sentence of Jadhav.

Implications of 'Effective Review and Reconsideration' for India:
- Effective review and reconsideration is a phrase which is different from ‘review’ as one understands in a domestic course.
- It includes giving consular access and helping Jadav in preparing his defence.
- It means that Pakistan has to disclose the charges and also the evidence which it has been absolutely opaque about uptill now.
- Pakistan would also have to disclose the circumstances in which Jadhav’s confession was extracted by the military.
- It implies that Jadhav will have a right to defend whichever forum or court hears his case.

Vienna Convention:
- The Vienna Convention on Consular Relations is an international treaty that defines consular relations between independent states.
• Article 36 of the Vienna Convention states that foreign nationals who are arrested or detained in the host country must be given notice without delay of their right to have their embassy or consulate notified of that arrest.
• If the detained foreign national so requests, the police must fax that notice to the embassy or consulate, which can then verify the detained person.

Insta Curious: Do you know what extraterritoriality is? Read Here.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Differences between ICJ and ICC.
2. Geographical locations of these organisations and overview of surrounding countries.
4. What is the Rome statute?

Mains Link:
Write a note on ICJ.

Link:
https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G7C96T3N3.1&imageview=0

6. ASEAN objects as China wants Myanmar junta to join the summit:

Context:
A Chinese envoy has lobbied Southeast Asian nations to let Myanmar’s military ruler attend a regional summit being hosted by China’s President next week but has met stiff opposition from other leaders.

What’s the issue?
Myanmar’s standing as a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has been thrown into the spotlight by a February 1 coup, when its military ousted the elected government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, sparking bloody turmoil.
• Following this, ASEAN leaders blocked Myanmar’s military chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, from an ASEAN summit after he failed to honour pledges to allow an ASEAN envoy to meet lawmakers overthrown in the coup.
• Later, ASEAN leaders said a non-political figure from Myanmar should be asked to attend. In the end, Myanmar was not represented.

What is ASEAN?
The Association of Southeast Asian Nations is a regional organization which was established to promote political and social stability amid rising tensions among the Asia-Pacific’s post-colonial states.
The motto of ASEAN is “One Vision, One Identity, One Community”.
ASEAN Secretariat – Indonesia, Jakarta.

Genesis:
Established in 1967 with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by its founding fathers.

Founding Fathers of ASEAN are: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand.

Ten Members: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Significance of ASEAN for India:
1. Against the backdrop of aggressive moves by China, including the Ladakh standoff, India placed the ASEAN at the centre of India’s Act East policy and held that a cohesive and responsive ASEAN is essential for security and growth for all in the region.
2. ASEAN is necessary for the success of the Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) Vision.
3. The region is significant for diversification and resilience of supply chains for post-Covid-19 economic recovery.
4. It is India’s 4th largest trading partner with about USD 86.9 billion in trade.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Geographical location of asean countries.
2. Total population of asean countries.
3. Chairmanship of ASEAN.
4. When and where Asean summits are held?
5. What are Free-trade agreements (FTAs)?

Mains Link:
Examine the significance of ASEAN for India’s economic, geo-strategic and security imperatives?
Link:
https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G73970QRM.1&imageview=0.

7. ASEAN meet:
Context:
China has announced USD 1.5 billion development assistance for the ASEAN besides the elevation of the ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership to strengthen security cooperation with the 10-nation bloc, amid the US push into the resource rich Indo-Pacific.

- Xi made the remarks at the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-China Special Summit to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of ASEAN-China Dialogue Relations.
- He also said China would never seek hegemony nor take advantage of its size to coerce smaller countries, and would work with Asean to eliminate “interference”.

8. Digital Tax pact:
Context:
India and the US have decided on a “transitional approach” to digital service tax imposed by the government.

- The terms of the deal will be the same that were thrashed out between the US and Austria, France, Italy, Spain, and the UK last week.
- The pact provides relief from the proposed American retaliatory action, while comforting tech giants such as Amazon, Google and Facebook that face the levy.

What’s the issue?
- The US had announced in January this year that India’s equalisation levy was discriminatory and actionable, and in March, proposed 25 per cent retaliatory tariffs on about 40 products including shrimps, wooden furniture, gold, silver and jewellery items and basmati rice.
- The levies could add up to about $55 million which was the approximate amount of the DST payable by US-based companies such as Google, Amazon, Linkedin and Facebook, as per calculations made by the USTR.

Background:
- In a major reform of the international tax system, on October 8 this year, 136 countries, including India, have agreed to an overhaul of global tax norms to ensure that multinationals pay taxes wherever they operate and at a minimum 15% rate.
- However, the deal requires countries to remove all digital services tax and other similar unilateral measures and to commit not to introduce such measures in the future.

Significance:
This compromise represents a pragmatic solution that helps ensure that countries can focus their collective efforts on the successful implementation of the OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework’s historic agreement on a new multilateral tax regime.

Two pillars of framework:
www.insightsonindia.com
1. **Dealing with transnational and digital companies.** This pillar ensures that large multinational enterprises, including digital companies, pay tax where they operate and earn profits.

2. **Dealing with low-tax jurisdictions to address cross-border profit shifting and treaty shopping.** This pillar seeks to put a floor under competition among countries through a global minimum corporate tax rate, currently proposed at 15%.

**Expected outcomes:**
If implemented, countries such as the Netherlands and Luxembourg that offer lower tax rates, and so-called tax havens such as Bahamas or British Virgin Islands, could lose their sheen.

**Impact/implications on India:**
India will have to roll back the equalisation levy that it imposes on companies such as Google, Amazon and Facebook when the global tax regime is implemented.

**Insta Curious:**
Have you heard of Country-by-Country (CbC) Report? Read this to understand.

**InstaLinks:**
**Prelims Link:**
1. OECD- objectives, composition and overview of geographical location of members.
2. OECD vs WEF.
3. Difference between signing and ratification.
4. What is BEPS?

**Mains Link:**
What are Country-by-Country (CbC) Report? Discuss their significance.

**Link:**

---

9. **OPEC+ move to hit recovery:**

**Context:**
China, the world’s largest crude importer, is non-committal about its intentions to release oil from its reserves on a request from the United States, while OPEC producers were not mulling changing tactics in light of the U.S. action.

**What’s the issue?**
U.S. President Joe Biden’s administration announced plans to release millions of barrels of oil from strategic reserves in coordination with other large consuming nations, including China, Japan and India, to try to cool prices. U.S. gasoline prices are up more than 60% in the last year, the fastest increase since 2000.

- Washington’s move raised speculation that the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies, collectively known as **OPEC+**, might consider pausing its current agreement to boost output by 4,00,000 barrels per day every month, but the group is not considering that.

**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.
What is OPEC?

1. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) was founded in Baghdad, Iraq, with the signing of an agreement in September 1960 by five countries namely Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela. They were to become the Founder Members of the Organization.

2. OPEC is a permanent, intergovernmental organization.

3. OPEC's objective is to co-ordinate and unify petroleum policies among Member Countries, in order to secure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers; an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations; and a fair return on capital to those investing in the industry.

4. It is headquartered in Vienna, Austria.

5. OPEC membership is open to any country that is a substantial exporter of oil and which shares the ideals of the organization.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
- Founder members of OPEC.
- Top oil producers?
- India’s crude oil imports?
- Components and refining of crude oil.
- Crude oil storage facilities in India?
- Geographical location of OPEC members.
- Type of Crude oil produced by OPEC and non-OPEC members.

Mains Link:

8. What is OPEC+?

10. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO):

Context:
At the recently held 20th meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government, India observed that raising bilateral issues is counterproductive to the spirit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

What’s the issue?
China and Pakistan have deliberately tried to bring bilateral issues into SCO. This violates the well-established principles and norms of the SCO Charter. Such acts are counterproductive to the spirit of consensus and cooperation that define this organisation and should be condemned.

About the SCO:
The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is a permanent intergovernmental international organization.

- The creation of SCO was announced on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai (China).
- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Charter was signed during the St.Petersburg SCO Heads of State meeting in June 2002, and entered into force on 19 September 2003.
- It was preceded by the Shanghai Five mechanism.
- The SCO's official languages are Russian and Chinese.
- The SCO Charter, sealed in 2002, calls for “peaceful settlement” of conflicts and disputes among member states.

Founding members of SCO were:

1. The Republic of Kazakhstan,
2. The People's Republic of China,
3. The Kyrgyz Republic,
4. The Russian Federation,
5. The Republic of Tajikistan,
6. The Republic of Uzbekistan.

Background:
Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan were members of the Shanghai Five, Prior to the creation of SCO in 2001.

Shanghai Five (1996) emerged from a series of border demarcation and demilitarization talks which the four former Soviet republics held with China to ensure stability along the borders.

Uzbekistan joined the organisation in 2001, following this the Shanghai Five was renamed the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

India and Pakistan became members in 2017.

Member Countries:
Now, SCO is comprised of Eight Member countries. Namely-
1. Kazakhstan
2. China
3. Kyrgyzstan
4. Russia
5. Tajikistan
6. Uzbekistan
7. India
8. Pakistan

Objectives of SCO:
- Strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states.
- Promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, the economy, research, technology and culture, as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, and other areas.
- Making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region.
- Moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order.

Significance for India:
The SCO’s significance for India lies in economics and geopolitics with the Eurasian states.
● SCO is a potential platform to advance India’s Connect Central Asia policy. The SCO member states occupy the huge landmass adjacent to India’s extended neighbourhood where India has both economic and security imperatives.
● Importance of SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group to stabilise Afghanistan. SCO membership provides India a vital counter to some of the other groupings it is a part of.
● The SCO provides the only multilateral platform for India to deal in close proximity with Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Insta Curious: Do you know about the Executive Committee of the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)? Reference: read this.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. What is Shanghai Five?
2. When was SCO charter signed and when it entered into force?
3. SCO founding members.
4. When did India join the group?
5. Observers and dialogue partners of SCO.
6. Permanent bodies under SCO.

Mains Link:
Discuss the objectives and significance of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GSQ97OUGR.1&imageview=0.

11. Interpol:

Context:
The Interpol has elected Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) Special Director Praveen Sinha as a Delegate for Asia in its Executive Committee.

About the Interpol Executive Committee:
The Executive Committee has 13 members from different countries comprising the President of the Interpol, two Vice-Presidents and nine Delegates.
• It supervises the execution of the Interpol General Assembly’s decisions and the administration and work of its General Secretariat.
• It meets three times a year and sets organisational policy and direction.

What is Interpol?
• The International Criminal Police Organisation, or Interpol, is a 194-member intergovernmental organisation.
• headquartered in Lyon, France.
• Formed in 1923 as the International Criminal Police Commission, and started calling itself Interpol in 1956.
• India joined the organisation in 1949, and is one of its oldest members.

Interpol’s declared global policing goals include:
• Countering terrorism, promoting border integrity worldwide, protection of vulnerable communities, providing a secure cyberspace for people and businesses, curbing illicit markets, supporting environment security, and promoting global integrity.

www.insightsonindia.com
What is the Interpol General Assembly?
● It is Interpol’s supreme governing body, and comprises representatives from all its member countries.
● It meets annually for a session lasting approximately four days, to vote on activities and policy.
● Each country is represented by one or more delegates at the Assembly, who are typically chiefs of law enforcement agencies.
● The Assembly also elects the members of the Interpol Executive Committee, the governing body which “provides guidance and direction in between sessions of the Assembly”.

Insta Curious: Did you know that like Interpol (which is a non-UN body), there is something called The United Nations Police (UNPOL). There is an Europol.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Who is a fugitive economic offender?
2. What is Interpol.
3. Various notices issued.

Mains Link: Discuss the significance of Interpol.
Suggest reforms.

4. Overview of Interpol's crime programmes.
GENERAL STUDIES – 3

Topics: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

1. RBI issues revised PCA framework for banks:

Context:
The RBI has issued a revised Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) framework for banks to enable supervisory intervention at “appropriate time” and also act as a tool for effective market discipline.

About the revised framework:
1. The revised PCA framework will be effective from January 1, 2022.
2. Capital, asset quality and leverage will be the key areas for monitoring.
3. Indicators to be tracked for capital, asset quality and leverage would be CRAR/Common Equity Tier I Ratio, Net NPA Ratio and Tier I Leverage Ratio, respectively.

What is Prompt Corrective Action (PCA)?
- PCA is a framework under which banks with weak financial metrics are put under watch by the RBI.
- The RBI introduced the PCA framework in 2002 as a structured early-intervention mechanism for banks that become undercapitalised due to poor asset quality, or vulnerable due to loss of profitability.
- It aims to check the problem of Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) in the Indian banking sector.
- The framework was reviewed in 2017 based on the recommendations of the working group of the Financial Stability and Development Council on Resolution Regimes for Financial Institutions in India and the Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission.

When is Prompt corrective action framework invoked?
The PCA is invoked when certain risk thresholds are breached. There are three risk thresholds which are based on certain levels of asset quality, profitability, capital and the like.

What are the types of restrictions?
There are two types of restrictions, mandatory and discretionary. Restrictions on dividend, branch expansion, directors compensation, are mandatory while discretionary restrictions could include curbs on lending and deposit.

What will a bank do if PCA is triggered?
- Banks are not allowed to renew or access costly deposits or take steps to increase their fee-based income.
- Banks will also have to launch a special drive to reduce the stock of NPAs and contain generation of fresh NPAs.
- They will also not be allowed to enter into new lines of business. RBI will also impose restrictions on the bank on borrowings from the interbank market.

Insta Curious:
Did you know that the PCA framework will apply to all banks operating in India, including foreign banks operating through branches or subsidiaries based on breach of risk thresholds of identified indicators?

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About PCA.
2. Features.
3. Parameters.

Mains Link: Discuss the significance of the PCA framework.
2. What is Input Tax Credit (ITC)?

Context:
The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) has come out with norms on blocking of tax credit by GST field officers, saying that such blocking should be on the basis of ‘material evidence’ and not just out of ‘suspicion.’

New Norms:
- The norms laid down five specific circumstances in which such credit could be blocked by a senior tax officer. These include invoices on which GST has not been paid by sellers.
- The commissioner or an officer authorised by him, not below the rank of assistant commissioner, must form an opinion for blocking of input tax credit (ITC) only after ‘proper application of mind’ considering all the facts of the case.

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.

Concerns over its misuse:
1. There could be possibility of misuse of the provision by unscrupulous businesses by generating fake invoices just to claim tax credit.
2. As much as 80% of the total GST liability is being settled by ITC and only 20% is deposited as cash.
3. Under the present dispensation, there is no provision for real time matching of ITC claims with the taxes already paid by suppliers of inputs.
4. Currently there is a time gap between ITC claim and matching them with the taxes paid by suppliers. Hence there is a possibility of ITC being claimed on the basis of fake invoices.

Insta Curious: Did you know that the Madras HC had held last year that Section 54(3) of the Central Goods and Service Tax (CGST) Act – which allows for a refund of Input Tax Credit (ITC) where the accumulation is due to an inverted duty structure – does not infringe on Article 14 of the Constitution? It said that refund of tax paid on inputs and not input services was available under the inverted duty structure.

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.


3. New RBI initiatives:

Context:
Prime Minister Narendra Modi has launched two customer-centric initiatives of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI):
1. The RBI Retail Direct Scheme.
2. The Reserve Bank-Integrated Ombudsman Scheme.

The two schemes will expand the scope of investment in the country and make access to capital markets easier and more secure for investors.
What is the RBI Retail Direct Scheme?
The Scheme is aimed at **enhancing access to the government securities market for retail investors.**
- It offers them a **new avenue for directly investing in the securities** issued by the Centre and the state governments.
- Investors will be able to easily open and maintain their government securities account online with the RBI, free of cost.
- The scheme offers a portal avenue to invest in central government securities, treasury bills, state development loans and Sovereign Gold Bonds (SGBs).
- The scheme places India in a **list of select few countries offering such a facility.**

What is the Reserve Bank-Integrated Ombudsman Scheme?
- It is aimed at further improving the grievance redress mechanism for resolving customer complaints against entities regulated by the central bank.
- The central theme of the scheme is based on 'One Nation-One Ombudsman' with one portal, one email and one address for the customers to lodge their complaints.
- The RBI has decided to **integrate the three ombudsman schemes into one** and also simplified the scheme by covering all complaints involving deficiency in service by centralising the receipt and initial processing of complaints to enhance process efficiency.
- **RB-IOS will do away with the jurisdictional limitations as well as limited grounds for complaints.** RBI will provide a single reference point for the customers to submit documents, track status of complaints filed and provide feedback.

Please note that:
The central bank’s alternate grievance redress mechanism currently comprises three ombudsman schemes— the Banking Ombudsman Scheme (BOS), launched in 1995, the Ombudsman Scheme for Non-Banking Financial Companies (OS-NBFC), 2018 and the Ombudsman Scheme for Digital Transactions (OSDT), 2019.

Importance of the schemes:
- The move comes at a time when rising inflation adds pressure on the RBI to lift rates.
- Tighter monetary policy is likely to weaken the demand for bonds, making it challenging for the government to execute its near-record borrowing program.
- Other emerging-market nations in Asia, like the Philippines, have also sought to raise funds from citizens to battle the pandemic.

**Insta Curious:** Do you know what Fine Paper is? Read **Here.**

**InstaLinks:**
**Prelims Link:**
1. What is a G-Secs?
2. Short- and long-term securities.
3. Powers of the Centre and states to issue these instruments.
4. Role of RBI.
5. Factors which affect the prices of these securities.

**Mains Link:**
What are G-Secs? Why are they significant? Discuss.


4. **₹10,000 cr. more allotted for MGNREGS:**
**Context:**
The Finance Ministry has allocated additional funds of ₹10,000 crore as an interim measure for **the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS)** after it ran out of funds allocated in the budget.
Need for:
According to its own financial statement, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme has run out of funds halfway through the financial year, and supplementary budgetary allocations will not come to the rescue for at least another month when the next Parliamentary session begins.

Implications:
- This means that payments for MGNREGA workers as well as material costs will be delayed, unless the States dip into their own funds.
- Activists say the Centre is condemning workers to “forced labour” by delaying wage payments at a time of economic distress.

About MGNREGA:
The scheme was introduced in 2005 as a social measure that guarantees “the right to work”.
- The key tenet of this social measure and labour law is that the local government will have to legally provide at least 100 days of wage employment in rural India to enhance their quality of life.

Key objectives:
1. Generation of paid rural employment of not less than 100 days for each worker who volunteers for unskilled labour.
2. Proactively ensuring social inclusion by strengthening the livelihood base of rural poor.
3. Creation of durable assets in rural areas such as wells, ponds, roads and canals.
4. Reduce urban migration from rural areas.
5. Create rural infrastructure by using untapped rural labour.

The following are the eligibility criteria for receiving the benefits under MGNREGA scheme:
1. Must be Citizen of India to seek MGNREGA benefits.
2. Job seeker has completed 18 years of age at the time of application.
3. The applicant must be part of a local household (i.e. application must be made with local Gram Panchayat).
4. Applicants must volunteer for unskilled labour.

Implementation of the scheme:
1. Within 15 days of submitting the application or from the day work is demanded, wage employment will be provided to the applicant.
2. Right to get unemployment allowance in case employment is not provided within fifteen days of submitting the application or from the date when work is sought.
3. Social Audit of MGNREGA works is mandatory, which lends to accountability and transparency.
4. The Gram Sabha is the principal forum for wage seekers to raise their voices and make demands.
5. It is the Gram Sabha and the Gram Panchayat which approves the shelf of works under MGNREGA and fix their priority.

Insta Curious: Do you know what WAGE RIFT is? Read Here (Related topic to Wages)

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Under MGNREGA, what are the roles of Gram Sabha, Gram Panchayat, States, State Food Commission, Centre?
2. What are job cards, who issues them?
3. Who sets up the State Employment Guarantee Fund?
4. What is Wage employment?
5. Who conducts social audits?

Mains Link: Discuss the key features and significance of MGNREGA.
Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GM494S2RE.1&imageview=0.
5. What is a K-shaped economic recovery and what are its implications?

Context:
The prospects of a K-shaped recovery from COVID are increasing both in India and across the world.

What is a K-shaped recovery?
A K-shaped recovery happens when different sections of an economy recover at starkly different rates.
1. Households at the top of the pyramid are likely to have seen their in- comes largely protected, and savings rates forced up during the lockdown, increasing ‘fuel in the tank’ to drive future consumption.
2. Meanwhile, households at the bottom are likely to have witnessed permanent hits to jobs and incomes.

What are the macro implications of a K-shaped recovery?
1. Upper-income households have benefitted from higher savings for two quarters.
2. Households at the bottom have experienced a permanent loss of income in the forms of jobs and wage cuts; this will be a recurring drag on demand, if the labour market does not heal faster.
3. To the extent that COVID has triggered an effective income transfer from the poor to the rich, this will be demand-impeding because the poor have a higher marginal propensity to consume (i.e. they tend to spend (instead of saving) a much higher proportion of their income.
4. If COVID-19 reduces competition or increases the inequality of incomes and opportunities, it could impinge on trend growth in developing economies by hurting productivity and tightening political economy constraints.

Way ahead:
Policy will, therefore, need to look beyond the next few quarters and anticipate the state of the macro economy post the sugar rush.

Insta Curious: Have a brief overview of various curves here.
**Topics: Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.**

1. RBI panel on ARCs:

**Context:**
To streamline the functioning of asset reconstruction companies (ARCs), the Reserve Bank panel has come out with a host of suggestions.

**Background:**
The RBI had set up a committee headed by Sudarshan Sen to undertake a comprehensive review of the working of asset reconstruction companies (ARCs) in the financial sector ecosystem and recommend suitable measures for enabling them to meet the growing requirements.

**Suggestions:**
1. Create an online platform for the sale of stressed assets.
2. Allow ARCs to act as resolution applicants during the IBC process.
3. The scope of Section 5 of the SARFAESI Act be expanded to permit ARCs to acquire financial assets from all regulated entities, including AIFs, FPIs, AMCs making investment on behalf of MFs and all NBFCs including HFCs.
4. For accounts above ₹500 crore, two bank-approved external valuers should carry out a valuation to determine liquidation value and fair market value.
5. Also, the final approval of the reserve price should be given by a high-level committee that has the power to approve the corresponding write-off of the loan.

**What is an Asset Reconstruction Company (ARC)?**
It is a specialized financial institution that buys the Non Performing Assets (NPAs) from banks and financial institutions so that they can clean up their balance sheets. This helps banks to concentrate in normal banking activities. Banks rather than going after the defaulters by wasting their time and effort, can sell the bad assets to the ARCs at a mutually agreed value.

- The asset reconstruction companies or ARCs are registered under the RBI.

**Legal Basis:**
The Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (SARFAESI) Act, 2002 provides the legal basis for the setting up of ARCs in India.

- The SARFAESI Act helps reconstruction of bad assets without the intervention of courts. Since then, a large number of ARCs were formed and were registered with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) which has got the power to regulate the ARCs.

**Capital Needs for ARCs:**
- As per amendment made in the SARFAESI Act in 2016, an ARC should have a minimum net owned fund of Rs. 2 crore.
- The RBI raised this amount to Rs. 100 crore in 2017. The ARCs also have to maintain a capital adequacy ratio of 15% of its risk weighted assets.

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. What are ARCs?
2. What is SARFAESI Act?
3. Sudarshan Sen committee is related to?

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

Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G1P95B187.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G1P95B187.1&imageview=0).

2. Centre allows seven states to borrow more:

**Context:**
The Finance Ministry has permitted seven States to borrow an additional ₹16,691 crore, linked to their having met specified capital expenditure targets in the June to September quarter.

**Background:**
[www.insightsonindia.com](http://www.insightsonindia.com)
States were required to achieve at least 45% of their capex targets for the year by the second quarter to be eligible for a nod to raise incremental borrowings from the market.

Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Punjab, Rajasthan and Telangana had met the targets for the first half of the year.

Why do states need the centre's permission while borrowing? Is it mandatory for all states?

Article 293(3) of the Constitution requires states to obtain the Centre’s consent in order to borrow in case the state is indebted to the Centre over a previous loan.

- This consent can also be granted subject to certain conditions by virtue of Article 293(4).
- In practice, the Centre has been exercising this power in accordance with the recommendations of the Finance Commission.

Every single state is currently indebted to the Centre and thus, all of them require the Centre’s consent in order to borrow.

Does the Centre have unfettered power to impose conditions under this provision?

Neither does the provision itself offer any guidance on this, nor is there any judicial precedent that one could rely on.

- Interestingly, even though this question formed part of the terms of reference of the 15th Finance Commission, it was not addressed in its interim report.

So, when can the centre impose conditions?

The Centre can impose conditions only when it gives consent for state borrowing, and it can only give such consent when the state is indebted to the Centre.

Why are such restrictions necessary?

- One possible purpose behind conferring this power upon the Centre was to protect its interests in the capacity of a creditor.
- A broader purpose of ensuring macroeconomic stability is also discernible, since state indebtedness negatively affects the fiscal health of the nation as a whole.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Article 293 is related to?
2. Do states need Centre's permission to Borrow from markets?

Mains Link:

Why do states need the centre's permission while borrowing? Is it mandatory for all states? Discuss.


3. Corporates to set up banks- Issues related:

Context:
The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has kept in abeyance a recommendation by an internal panel to give banking licences to large business groups, while allowing promoters to own up to 26% in private banks.

What has happened?
The IWG was constituted to “review extant ownership guidelines and corporate structure for Indian private sector banks” and submitted its report last week.

- One key recommendation of the group was related to allowing large corporate/industrial houses to be promoters of private banks.

What’s the issue now?

www.insightsonindia.com
Former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan and former RBI Deputy Governor Viral Acharya have criticised the suggestion by the IWG, describing it a “bombshell”.

- They observed, it would be ‘penny wise pound foolish’ to replace the poor governance under the present structure of these (public sector/government-owned) banks with a highly conflicted structure of ownership by industrial houses.

**Why is the recommendation to allow large corporates to float their own banks being criticised?**

Historically, RBI has been of the view that the ideal ownership status of banks should promote a balance **between efficiency, equity and financial stability**.

- A greater play of private banks is not without its risks. The global financial crisis of 2008 was a case in point.
- A predominantly government-owned banking system tends to be more financially stable because of the trust in government as an institution.
- More specifically, here in this case, the main concern in allowing large corporates to open their own banks is a basic conflict of interest, or more technically, “connected lending”.

**What is connected lending?**

A situation where the promoter of a bank is also a borrower and, as such, it is possible for a promoter to channel the depositors’ money into their own ventures.

- Connected lending has been happening for a long time and the RBI has been always behind the curve in spotting it.
- The recent episodes in ICICI Bank, Yes Bank, DHFL etc. were all examples of connected lending.
- The so-called ever-greening of loans (where one loan after another is extended to enable the borrower to pay back the previous one) is often the starting point of such lending.

---

**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. Edible oil prices:

**Context:**

The prices of most major cooking oils have dropped and stabilised across the country in the run-up to Diwali.

**Reasons for the drop in prices:**

1. Stabilisation of global prices.
2. Duty cuts.
3. Cut in wholesale prices by major private players.
4. Stock limits imposed by the Centre, using the provisions of the Essential Commodities Act.

**What led to increase in oil prices previously?**

- Global commodity prices are extremely high. COVID-19 is a major factor, disrupting supply chains, closing down industries.
- There is insufficient labour in the oil production industry in many countries.
- Excessive buying of edible oil by China.
- Many major oil producers are aggressively pursuing biofuel policies and diverting their edible oil crops for that purpose.
- Governmental taxes and duties also make up a major chunk of the retail price of edible oils in India.

**India’s Dependence on Edible Oil:**

- India is the world’s biggest vegetable oil importer.
- **India imports about 60% of its edible oil needs**, leaving the country’s retail prices vulnerable to international pressures.
- It imports palm oil from Indonesia and Malaysia, soyoil from Brazil and Argentina, and sunflower oil, mainly from Russia and Ukraine.
Facts about Edible Oils:
- **Primary sources of Edible oil** (Soybean, Rapeseed & Mustard, Groundnut, Sunflower, Safflower & Niger) and **secondary sources of Edible Oil** (Oil palm, Coconut, Rice Bran, Cotton seeds & Tree Borne Oilseeds).
- In India **major challenges in oilseed production** is
  - Growing in largely rain-fed conditions (around 70% area),
  - high seed cost (Groundnut and Soybean),
  - small holding with limited resources,
  - low seed replacement rate and low productivity.

**Insta Curious:** Recently the Government announced the **National Edible Oil Mission-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP)** to boost **domestic oilseed production** and make the country self-sufficient in cooking oils.

**InstaLinks:**
- **Prelims Link:**
  1. About Edible oil
  2. Primary and Secondary sources of Edible oil
  3. Major edible oil importing countries
  4. About National Edible Oil Mission-Oil Palm (NMEO-OP) and its provisions

**Mains Link:** Why does India have to import edible oils? What is the burden of importing edible oils on the government’s exchequer? What can we do to boost the domestic production of edible oils? Elaborate.


2. **What are Landraces?**

**Context:**
Among the winners of this year’s **Padma awards** is **Rahibai Popere**, popularly known as **Seedmother**, from Akole taluka of Ahmednagar, Maharashtra.
- Her Padma Shri is a recognition of her work that has helped save hundreds of **landraces** (wild varieties of commonly grown crops) at the village level.

**What are landraces?**
Landraces refer to **naturally occurring variants of commonly cultivated crops**. These are as opposed to commercially grown crops, which are developed by selective breeding (hybrids) or through genetic engineering to express a certain trait over others.

**Impact of selection and breeding on landraces:**
Biodiversity allows a natural mechanism for crops to develop traits to face challenging situations. However, given the large-scale human interference in crop selection, that ability is now lost in most commercial crops.
- Crop improvement through selection and breeding over several decades has narrowed the genetic base of most crops.

**Need for and significance of landraces:**
Amid the threat of climate change, a challenge before scientists and policymakers is to develop varieties that can withstand both abiotic and biotic stresses.
- Naturally occurring landraces have a large pool of still untapped genetic material, which can provide solutions.
- Genetic diversity is nature’s survival mechanism. The wider the gene pool, the more the chance of developing a trait that can help in surviving extreme climate events.

**Way ahead:**
Much remains to be understood about the germplasms of the landraces. Research is in the early stages. It is necessary to understand how these landraces can contribute to climate-resilient agriculture; nutritional...
profiling too can hold the key to fighting deficiencies, as many landraces are richer in nutrients than commercially grown variants.

Link: [https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-hybrid-crops-importance-preserving-landraces-7620396/lite/](https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-hybrid-crops-importance-preserving-landraces-7620396/lite/).

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. Rashtriya Gokul Mission:

Context:
A review meeting on the performance of the Rashtriya Gokul Mission was held recently.

What is the Rashtriya Gokul Mission?
‘Rashtriya Gokul Mission’ was launched in 2014 to conserve and develop indigenous bovine breeds, under the National Programme for Bovine Breeding and Dairy Development (NPBBD).

Key objectives of the mission
- Development and conservation of indigenous breeds.
- Undertake breed improvement programme for indigenous cattle breeds so as to improve the genetic makeup and increase the stock.
- Enhance milk production and productivity.
- Upgrade nondescript cattle using elite indigenous breeds like Gir, Sahiwal, Rathi, Deoni, Tharparkar, Red Sindhi.
- Distribute disease free high genetic merit bulls for natural service.

Implementation
1. It is being implemented through the “State Implementing Agency’ Livestock Development Boards, i.e., SIA’s (LDB’s).
2. State Gauseva Ayogs are mandated to sponsor proposals to the SIA’s (LDB’s) and monitor implementation of the sponsored proposal.
3. The “Participating Agencies” like CFSPTI, CCBFs, ICAR, Universities, Colleges, NGO’s, Cooperative Societies and Gaushalas with best germplasm.

What are Gokul Grams?
The Rashtriya Gokul Mission envisages the establishment of integrated cattle development centers, ‘Gokul Grams’ to develop indigenous breeds including up to 40% nondescript breeds.

Gokul Grams will be established in:
- The native breeding tracts and
- Near metropolitan cities for housing the urban cattle.

Objectives:
- Promote indigenous cattle rearing and conservation in a scientific manner.
- Propagate high genetic merit bulls of indigenous breeds.
- Optimize modern Farm Management practices and promote Common Resource Management.
- Utilize animal waste in an economical way i.e. Cow Dung, Cow Urine.

Key features of Gokul Grams
- They will be self-sustaining and will generate economic resources from sale of A2 milk organic manure, vermi-composting, urine distillates, and production of electricity from bio gas for in house consumption and sale of animal products.
- They will also function as state of the art in situ training centre for Farmers, Breeders and MAITRI’s.
- Gokul Grams act as Centres for development of Indigenous Breeds and a dependable source for supply of high genetic breeding stock to the farmers in the breeding tract.
- The Gokul Gram will maintain **milch and unproductive animals in the ratio of 60:40** and will have **the capacity to maintain about 1000 animals**.
- Nutritional requirements of the animals will be provided in the Gokul Gram through in house fodder production.

**Insta Curious:** Many States have schemes to protect stray Cattle. Have a brief overview of them [here](#).

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. What are Gokul Grams?
2. Can they be established in Metropolitan cities?
3. Milch and unproductive animals ratio to be maintained by Gokul Grams.
4. About the National Programme for Bovine Breeding and Dairy Development (NPBBD).
5. When was the Rashtriya Gokul Mission launched?

**Mains Link:**
Write a note on Rashtriya Gokul Mission.

**2. Policy on MSP:**

**Context:**
Farmers are demanding a **law for guaranteed minimum support price (MSP)**.

**What is MSP?**
MSP is the rate at which the government buys grains from farmers. Currently, it fixes MSPs for 23 crops grown in both Kharif and Rabi seasons.

**How is it calculated?**
The MSP is the rate at which the government purchases crops from farmers, and is **based on a calculation of at least one-and-a-half times the cost of production incurred by the farmers**.

- The **Union Budget for 2018-19** had announced that MSP would be kept at levels of 1.5 the cost of production.
- The **MSP is fixed twice a year on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)**, which is a statutory body and submits separate reports recommending prices for kharif and rabi seasons.

**Which production costs are taken in fixing the MSPs?**
The CACP **considers both ‘A2+FL’ and ‘C2’ costs while recommending MSP**.

1. **A2** costs cover all paid-out expenses, both in cash and kind, incurred by farmers on seeds, fertilisers, chemicals, hired labour, fuel and irrigation, among others.
2. **A2+FL** covers actual paid-out costs plus an imputed value of unpaid family labour.
3. **The C2** costs account for the rentals and interest forgone on owned land and fixed capital assets respectively, on top of A2+FL.

**The limitations of MSP:**

1. The major problem with the MSP is lack of government machinery for procurement for all crops except wheat and rice, which the Food Corporation of India actively procures under the PDS.
2. As state governments procure the last mile grain, the farmers of states where the grain is procured completely by the government benefit more while those in states that procure less are often affected.
3. The MSP-based procurement system is also dependent on middlemen, commission agents and APMC officials, which smaller farmers find difficult to get access to.

**InstaCurious:** What is agroforestry? Why does India need to promote this? [Reference](#).

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. Composition of CCEA.
2. What is CACP?
3. How many crops are covered under the MSP scheme?
4. Who announces MSP?
5. Difference between Kharif and Rabi crops.
1. What is Punjab Land Preservation Act of 1900, how it was tweaked?

Context:
The Punjab Land Preservation Act was enacted by the then government of Punjab in 1900. Through the Punjab Land Preservation (Haryana Amendment) Bill, 2019, the state government has proposed many changes.

Now, what's the issue?
The original law provided for the conservation of subsoil water and/or prevention of erosion in areas found to be subject to erosion or likely to become liable to erosion.

- As per Section 3 of the original act, the government has powers to bring any area ‘subject to erosion or likely to become liable to erosion’ under the ambit of the PLPA through a notification.
- But, a new section- Section 3A, has been inserted into the Bill to exclude certain areas from the ambit of the Act.

What are the concerns?
- Under its provisions, the PLPA won’t apply to ‘the lands included in the final development plans, any other town improvement plans or schemes’ published under the provisions of many laws like Haryana Municipal Corporation Act, 1994, the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority Act, 2017.
- Environmentalists feel that the latest move by the government has exposed thousands of acres land falling on the hills and foothills of Aravallis, which cover over 26,000 acres in Gurgaon and Faridabad districts, to mining and real estate development.

Need for conservation:
According to a report in May 2019 by the Central Ground Water Board under the Ministry of Jal Shakti, 105 out of 138 blocks are in the dark zone. At current rates of depletion, good quality water in the first aquifer up to a depth of 100 m shall be exhausted in 10 years, and the entire subsurface water resource could be finished in the next 22 years.

Insta Curious: Last year, the Punjab Cabinet approved a law regarding shamlat land. What is Shamlat land?
Reference: read this.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. About the law.
2. Key provisions.

Mains Link: Discuss the concerns associated with the proposed amendments.

Link: https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-what-is-punjab-land-preservation-act-of-1900-7621833/lite/.

Topics: Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

1. Centre accepts Cairn’s offer on retrospective tax:

Context:
Moving quickly towards ending a retrospective tax dispute with a firm that gave India its largest oilfield, the government has accepted Cairn Energy PLC undertakings which would allow for the refund of taxes.

- The company will now be issued a ₹7,900 crore refund.
What’s the issue?
In December 2020, a three-member international arbitral tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Netherlands ruled unanimously that the Indian government was “in breach of the guarantee of fair and equitable treatment”, and against the India-UK Bilateral Investment Treaty, and that the breach caused a loss to the British energy company and ordered compensation of $1.2 billion.

- 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 2014, the Indian tax department had demanded Rs 10,247 crore in taxes.
- In 2015, Cairn Energy Plc commenced international arbitration proceedings against the Indian government.

What next?
Please note that the Indian government’s recent amendment to taxation laws nullifies the tax assessment originally levied against Cairn in January 2016 and orders the refund of ₹7,900 crore which was collected from Cairn in respect of that assessment.

What is retrospective taxation?
- It allows a country to pass a rule on taxing certain products, items or services and deals and charge companies from a time behind the date on which the law is passed.
- Countries use this route to correct any anomalies in their taxation policies that have, in the past, allowed companies to take advantage of such loopholes.
- Retrospective Taxation hurts companies that had knowingly or unknowingly interpreted the tax rules differently.

Permanent Court of Arbitration:
1. It was established in 1899 and is headquartered in The Hague, Netherlands.
2. It is an intergovernmental organization dedicated to serve the international community in the field of dispute resolution and to facilitate arbitration and other forms of dispute resolution between States.
3. All decisions, called “awards” are binding on all the parties in the dispute and have to be carried out without delay.

Insta Curious: How arbitration, mediation and conciliation are different from each other? Reference:

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. What is Arbitration?
2. Recent Amendments.
3. About the International Court of Arbitration.
4. About the Arbitration Council of India.

Mains Link: Discuss the significance of the Arbitration and Conciliation (Amendment) Act.

Topics: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

1. One Sun, One World, One Grid:

Context:
This initiative was announced on the second day of COP26 by India and the United Kingdom to tap solar energy and have it travel seamlessly across borders.

About the initiative:
- The initiative brings together the International Solar Alliance and the UK’s green grid initiative and complements India’s focus on harnessing the sun’s energy.
● The grid will be set up over the next few years by the International Solar Alliance (ISA), another initiative authored by India initially, to transport solar power to different countries.

● The vision behind the OSOWOG is ‘The Sun Never Sets’ and is a constant at some geographical location, globally, at any given point of time.

Implementation:
● A Ministerial Steering Group will work towards accelerating the making of large solar power stations and wind farms in the best locations, linked together by continental-scale grids crossing national borders.
● The Ministerial Steering Group includes France, India, the United Kingdom and the United States, and will also have representatives from Africa, the Gulf, Latin America and Southeast Asia.

Significance of world grid:
With one worldwide grid, we can access clean energy at all places. The need to store energy would also lessen, and the viability of solar projects will increase.

Potential and benefits of the initiative:
● India would generate 40% of power from non-fossil fuels by 2030 and has called for connecting solar energy supply across borders giving the mantra of ‘One World One Sun One Grid’.
● The proposed integration would lead to reduced project costs, higher efficiencies and increased asset utilization for all the participating entities.
● This plan will require only incremental investment because it will not require a parallel grid infrastructure due to working with existing grids.
● It will help all the participating entities in attracting investments in renewable energy sources as well as utilizing skills, technology and finances.
● Resulting economic benefits would positively impact poverty alleviation and support in mitigating water, sanitation, food and other socio-economic challenges.
● It will allow national renewable energy management centers in India to grow as regional and global management centers.
● At a global level, almost 2,600 GW of interconnection capacity may be possible up to 2050, delivering estimated power savings of 226 billion euros per year.

One Sun Declaration:
The announcement was accompanied by the “One Sun Declaration”, which stated that, “realising the vision of ‘One Sun One World One Grid’ through interconnected green grids can be transformational, enabling all of us to meet the targets of the Paris Agreement to prevent dangerous climate change, to accelerate the clean energy transition, and to achieve the sustainable development goals.
● The declaration has been endorsed by 80 ISA member countries.

Insta Curious: Did you know that the sun produces in just one hour the amount of energy used by all humans in one year? This energy is totally clean and sustainable.

InstaLinks: Prelims Link:
1. OSOWOG initiative- objectives.
2. When was it launched?
3. Implementing agency.

Mains Link:
Discuss the significance of OSOWOG initiative.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G5T95BC70.1&imageview=0.

2. Cabinet nod for mobile services in 7,287 villages:
Context:
The Union Cabinet has given its approval for provisioning of mobile services in uncovered villages of Aspirational Districts across five States.
The project envisages to provide 4G mobile services in the 7,287 uncovered villages of 44 Aspirational Districts in the five States at an estimated cost of ₹6,466 crore, including operational expenses for five years.

Implementation:
The project will be funded by Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) and is targeted to be completed within 18 months after the signing of the agreement.

What is USOF?
Universal Service Obligation Fund was established in 2002, with the main aim to provide universal telecom services and ensure that even the unconnected areas in the country reap the benefits of inclusive development.

- The Indian Telegraph (Amendment) Act, 2003 gave statutory status to the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF).
- The USOF is headed by the USOF Administrator who reports to the Secretary, Department of Telecommunications (DoT).

Funding:
The funds for the USOF comes from Universal Service Levy (USL). The USL is charged from all the telecom operators on their Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR). These are then deposited into the Consolidated Fund of India, and prior parliamentary approval is required for dispatching.

USOFs contributions to Inclusive development of the country:
1. The USOF enables rural Indians to achieve their fullest potential and participate productively in the development of the nation by virtue of being effectively connected through a reliable and ubiquitous telecommunications network, access to which is within their reach and within their means.
2. It helps provide widespread and non-discriminatory access to quality ICT services at affordable prices to people in rural and remote areas.
3. It also provides an effective and powerful linkage to the hinterland thereby mainstreaming the population of rural and remote parts of the country.
4. Provision of reliable, robust, and high-speed telecom and broadband facilities will be imperative from the viewpoint of consumers, as well as for strategic and governance reasons.
5. 4G mobile services, which were constrained due to limited backhaul bandwidth provided via satellite will also see a major improvement.
6. Creation of Infrastructure for mobile services in remote, rural areas.
7. Provision of broadband in villages in a phased manner.
8. Induction of new technologies like national optic fibre network in rural areas.

Insta Curious: Have you heard about `Internet Saathi’ programme? Reference: read this.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. About USOF.
2. About BharatNet Project.
3. What is optical fibre?
4. What is AGR?
5. About Aspirational Districts Programme.

Mains Link:
Discuss the significance of USOF.

Link:
https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G7C96ST7F.1&imageview=0.

3. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY):
Context:
The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved continuation of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)-I and II up to September, 2022, and Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism Affected Areas up to March, 2023.
- The timeline has been extended to ensure works envisaged under the three schemes are completed.
Need for:
- Majority of pending works under PMGSY-I and II are in the North-East and Hill States due to factors such as COVID lockdown, extended rains, winters, forest issues.
- Also, the States have been requesting the Central Government for extension of time to complete these crucial works related to rural economy.

About PMGSY:
**Objective:** To provide connectivity, by way of an all-weather road to unconnected habitations.

**Eligibility:** Unconnected habitations of designated population size (500+ in plain areas and 250+ in North-Eastern States, Himalayan States, Deserts and Tribal Areas as per 2001 census) in the core network for uplifting the socio-economic condition of the rural population.

**Funding:** The Union Government bears 90% of the project cost in respect of projects sanctioned under the scheme in North-Eastern and Himalayan States, whereas for other states the Union Government bears 60% of the cost.

**PMGSY - Phase I:**
- PMGSY - Phase I was launched in December, 2000 as a 100% centrally sponsored scheme.
- Under the scheme, 1,35,436 habitations were targeted for providing road connectivity and 3.68 lakh km. for upgradation of existing rural roads in order to ensure full farm to market connectivity.

**PMGSY - Phase II:**
- The Government of India subsequently launched PMGSY-II in 2013 for upgradation of 50,000 Kms of existing rural road network to improve its overall efficiency.
- While the ongoing PMGSY - I continued, under PMGSY phase II, the roads already built for village connectivity was to be upgraded to enhance rural infrastructure.

**Challenges:**
1. Lack of dedicated funds.
2. Limited involvement of the Panchayati Raj Institutions.
3. Inadequate execution and contracting capacity.
4. Less working season and difficult terrain particularly in Hill States.
5. Scarcity of the construction materials.
6. Security concerns particularly in Left Wing Extremism (LWE) areas.

**About the Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism Affected Areas:**
Started in 2016, it is envisaged in LWE States including the 44 LWE affected districts in 9 States.
- The roads taken up under the scheme would include Other District Roads (ODRs), Village Roads (VRs) and upgradation of the existing Major District Roads (MDRs) that are critical from the security point of view.
- Bridges up to a span of 100 meters, critical from security angle would also be funded on these roads.

**Insta Curious:** Know about the key features of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana-III (PMGSY-III) [here](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G7C96ST7D.1&imageview=0).

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. About PMGSY.
2. About the Road Connectivity Project for Left Wing Extremism Affected Areas.
3. About LWE affected districts.
4. About CCEA.

**Mains Link:** Discuss the significance of road Infrastructure for the development of rural India.

Link: [https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G7C96ST7D.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G7C96ST7D.1&imageview=0).
4. **Green Hydrogen**

**Context:**
The Narendra Modi government’s **National Hydrogen Mission** is kick-starting with the Indian Oil Corporation (IOCL) floating a global tender to set up **green hydrogen** generation units at two of its big refineries in North India. IOCL is India’s largest commercial undertaking, operating the largest number of refineries in the country.

**What is green hydrogen?**
Hydrogen when produced by electrolysis using renewable energy is known as Green Hydrogen which has **no carbon footprint**.
- The hydrogen that is in use today is produced using fossil fuels, which is the primary source.
- Organic materials such as fossil fuels and biomass are used for releasing hydrogen through chemical processes.

**Significance of Green Hydrogen:**
1. Green hydrogen energy is vital for India to meet its **Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC)** Targets and ensure regional and national energy security, access and availability.
2. Green Hydrogen can act as an energy storage option, which would be essential to meet intermittencies (of renewable energy) in the future.
3. In terms of mobility, for long distance mobilisations for either urban freight movement within cities and states or for passengers, Green Hydrogen can be used in railways, large ships, buses or trucks, etc.

**Applications of green hydrogen:**
1. Green Chemicals like ammonia and methanol can directly be utilized in existing applications like fertilizers, mobility, power, chemicals, shipping etc.
2. Green Hydrogen blending up to 10% may be adopted in CGD networks to gain widespread acceptance.

**Benefits:**
- It is a clean-burning molecule, which can decarbonize a range of sectors including iron and steel, chemicals, and transportation.
- Renewable energy that cannot be stored or used by the grid can be channelled to produce hydrogen.

**What are the steps the Indian government has taken in the production of green hydrogen?**
1. During the budget speech in February 2021, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced the launch of the **Hydrogen Energy Mission** to produce hydrogen from renewable sources.
2. In the same month, state-owned Indian Oil Corporation signed an agreement with Greenstat Norway for setting up a **Centre of Excellence on Hydrogen (CoE-H)**. It will promote R&D projects for the production of green and blue hydrogen between Norwegian and Indian R&D institutions/universities.
3. Recently, India and the US have set up a task force under the aegis of the **Strategic Clean Energy Partnership (SCEP)** to mobilise finance and speed up green energy development.

**Insta Curious:** Hydrogen fuel can be produced through several methods. Read about few here, [Insightsonindia.com](http://www.insightsonindia.com)

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
1. About Green Hydrogen.
2. How is it produced?
3. Applications.

**Mains Link:**

5. **Strategic petroleum reserves (SPR) programme**

**Context:**
India will release 5 million barrels of crude oil from its emergency stockpile in tandem with the U.S., China, Japan, and other major economies to cool oil prices.
- This is the first time ever that India, which stores 5.33 million tonne or about 38 million barrels of crude oil in underground caverns at three locations on the east and west coast, is releasing stocks for such purposes.

www.insightsonindia.com
Background:
- The U.S. had last week made an unusual request to some of the largest oil-consuming nations, including China, India and Japan, to consider releasing crude stocks in a coordinated effort to pare global energy prices.
- This after the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies rebuffed repeated requests to speed up production increases.

About the SPR Programme:
Strategic petroleum reserves are huge stockpiles of crude oil to deal with any crude oil-related crisis like the risk of supply disruption from natural disasters, war or other calamities.
- The petroleum reserves are strategic in nature and the crude oil stored in these reserves will be used during an oil shortage event, as and when declared so by the Government of India.
- The construction of the Strategic Crude Oil Storage facilities is being managed by Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Limited (ISPRL), a Special Purpose Vehicle, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB) under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.

Phase 1 and phase 2:
Under Phase I of strategic petroleum reserves (SPR) programme, Government of India, through its Special Purpose Vehicle, Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserve Limited (ISPRL), has established petroleum storage facilities with total capacity of 5.33 Million Metric Tonnes (MMT) at 3 locations, namely (i) Vishakhapatnam (ii) Mangaluru and (iii) Padur.
Under Phase II of the petroleum reserve program, the Government has approved two additional commercial-cum-strategic facilities at Chandikhol (Odisha) and Padur (TN) on Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model.

Need for strategic oil reserves:
1. In 1990, as the Gulf war engulfed West Asia, India was in the throes of a major energy crisis. By all accounts India’s oil reserves at the time were adequate for only three days. While India managed to avert the crisis then, the threat of energy disruption continues to present a real danger even today.
2. To address energy insecurity, the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government mooted the concept of strategic petroleum reserves in 1998. Today, with Indian Consumption increasing, the case for creating such reserves grows stronger.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About SPR Programme.
2. Locations.
3. Implementation.

Mains Link: To address energy insecurity, the government of India had mooted the concept of strategic petroleum reserves in 1998. At present the demand for the same is growing stronger with each passing day. Discuss why such reserve is needed.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GOG97HP2J.1&imageview=0.

6. Bharat Gaurav scheme:
Context:
To tap the huge potential of tourism, the Railways has announced the ‘Bharat Gaurav’ Scheme.

About the Bharat Gaurav Scheme:
- Under this Scheme, theme-based tourist circuit trains, on the lines of the Ramayana Express, can be run either by private or State-owned operators.
Key features of the scheme:
- Service providers, who can be an individual, company, society, trust, joint venture or consortium will be free to decide themes/circuits.
- They will offer an all-inclusive package to tourists including rail travel, hotel accommodation and sightseeing arrangement, visit to historical/heritage sites, tour guides etc.
- They have full flexibility to decide the package cost.
- The service providers will also be able to design/furnish the interior of the coaches based on the theme and put branding or advertising inside and outside of the train.

Benefits of such Scheme:
These trains will help realise India’s rich cultural heritage and magnificent historical places to the people of India and the world. They will also help in tapping the vast tourism potential of India.

Recent Decision of Ministry of Railways in this regard:
1. On July 1, 2020, the Ministry of Railways announced that 151 trains in 109 pairs of routes will be operated by private sectors. It comprises just 5% of the 2,800 Express and Mail services operated by Indian Railways.
2. Private trains will start operating tentatively in 2023 and in 12 clusters.
3. Private companies will be given the freedom to procure locomotives and trains from their source of choice.
4. Railways has invited Request for Qualifications proposals, for scrutiny of vendor capabilities, from those who can bring modern trains for operations on existing rail infrastructure.

Insta Curious: Do you know about India’s first private train? Is it still in operation today? Reference: read this.

InstaLinks:
- Prelims Link:
  1. When were Railway and General budgets merged?
  2. India’s first private train.
  3. Bibrek Debroy Committee is related to?
  4. Key features the scheme.
- Mains Link:
  5. Eligibility.

Topics: Investment models.

1. What are Infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs)?

Context:
Canadian Pension Plan Investment Board and Ontario Teachers’ Pension Plan will be the anchor investors for the Infrastructure Investment Trust (InvIT) of the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) with each picking up 25% stake.
- Besides, NHAI would retain a minimum of 15% equity and the rest would be offered to domestic institutional investors.

Background:
www.insightsonindia.com
The InvIT will initially have a portfolio of five operating toll roads with an aggregate length of 390 kilometers, with more roads planned to be added later.

**What are Infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs)?**
They are institutions similar to mutual funds, which pool investment from various categories of investors and invest them into completed and revenue-generating infrastructure projects, thereby creating returns for the investor.

- They are regulated under the Sebi (Infrastructure Investment Trusts) Regulations, 2014 and the Indian Trust Act, 1882.

**Structure of InvITs:**
They have a trustee, sponsor(s), investment manager and project manager.

- **Trustee** (certified by Sebi) has the responsibility of inspecting the performance of an InvIT.
- **Sponsor(s)** are promoters of the company that set up the InvIT.
- **Investment manager** is entrusted with the task of supervising the assets and investments of the InvIT.
- **Project manager** is responsible for the execution of the project.

**The key features of InvITs are:**
1. Mandatory distribution of 90% of net distributable cash flows to the unit investors, leverage cap of 70% on the net asset value, and a cap on exposure to assets under construction (for publicly placed InvITs).
2. The sponsor of the InvIT is responsible for setting up the InvIT and appointing the trustee.
3. The sponsor should hold a minimum 15% of the units issued by the InvIT with a lock-in period of three years from the date of issuance.

**How does it benefit the investor?**
1. InvITs enable investors to buy a small portion of the units being sold by the fund depending upon their risk appetite.
2. Given that such trusts comprise largely of completed and operational projects with positive cash flow, the risks are somewhat contained.
3. Unit holders also benefit from favourable tax norms, including exemption on dividend income and no capital gains tax if units are held for more than three years.

**How will it help NHAI?**
- The issue will enable NHAI to monetise its completed National Highways that have a toll collection track record of at least one year.
- This will help the company raise funds for more road development across the country.

**Insta Curious:** Do you know what are the differences between REIT and InvIT? Reference: read [this](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G5Q95EPCJ.1&imageview=0).

**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. What are Technical Textiles?**

**Context:**
The Centre is targeting five times’ increase in export of technical textiles in three years.

**Technical Textiles market and India’s share in it:**
- The world market for technical textiles is $250 billion and India’s share is $19 billion.
- The biggest players are the U.S., West European countries, China and Japan.

**Government efforts in this regard:**
In January 2019, the government issued 207 HSN Codes for technical textiles and in less than two years, India had become a net exporter of technical textiles.

It also unveiled the National Technical Textiles Mission in February last year.

As many as 92 technical textile items have been made mandatory for use by government organisations covering agriculture, horticulture, highways, railways, water resources, and medical applications.

About the National Technical Textiles Mission:
The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) had, in 2020, approved the setting up of a National Technical Textiles Mission at an total outlay of ₹1,480 Crore.

Aim:
To position the country as a global leader in technical textiles and increase the use of technical textiles in the domestic market.

The Mission will be implemented for four years from 2020-2021 and will have four components:

1. The first component will focus on research and development and innovation and will have an outlay of ₹1,000 crore. The research will be at both, fibre level and application-based in geo, agro, medical, sports and mobile textiles and development of bio-degradable technical textiles.
2. The second component will be for promotion and development of market for technical textiles. The Mission will aim at taking domestic market size to $40 billion to $50 billion by 2024.
3. The third component will focus on export promotion so that technical textile exports from the country reach from the ₹14,000 crore now to ₹20,000 crore by 2021-2022 and ensure 10% average growth every year till the Mission ends.
4. The last component will be on education, training and skill development.

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. Depending upon their application areas, Technical Textiles products are divided into 12 broad categories: Agrotech, Buildtech, Clothtech, Geotech, Hometech, Indutech, Mobiltech, Meditech, Protech, Sportstech, Oekotech, Packtech.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. What are technical textiles?
2. Features.
3. Types.

Mains Link:
Discuss the significance of technical textiles.
Link:

2. Iran and enriched uranium:
Context:
Iran’s stockpile of 20% enriched uranium has reached over 210 kilograms, the latest defiant move ahead of upcoming nuclear talks with the West.
● Also, so far the Iran agency has also produced 25 kilograms of 60% enriched uranium, a level that only countries with nuclear weapons have the physical capabilities to produce.

What’s the cause for concern?
● **Under the historic 2015 nuclear deal** between Iran and the World Powers, Iran was **not meant to enrich uranium above 3.67%**.
● The U.S. unilaterally pulled out of the nuclear deal in 2018 under then-President Donald Trump, but Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia have tried to preserve the accord.
● Please note that **enriched uranium above 90% can be used for nuclear weapons**.

Background:
In September, the International Atomic Energy Agency said Iran’s stockpile of uranium enriched to up to 20% fissile purity was estimated at 84.3 kilograms (185 pounds) up from 62.8 kilograms (138 pounds) three months earlier.

**The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA:**
The 2015 deal promises Iran economic incentives in exchange for limits on its nuclear program, and is meant to prevent Tehran from developing a nuclear bomb.

● **The U.S. unilaterally pulled out of the deal in 2018** under then-President Donald Trump, but Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia have tried to preserve the accord.
● Under the deal with world powers, the other signatories were to provide Iran with 20% enriched uranium needed for its research reactor.
● Under the terms of the nuclear deal, Iran was prohibited from enriching uranium above 3.67% with the exception of its research reactor activities.

What is the goal of **uranium enrichment**?
Uranium contains a rare radioactive isotope, called **U-235**, that can be used to power nuclear reactors at low enrichment levels and to fuel nuclear bombs at much higher levels.

● **The goal of uranium enrichment is to** raise the percentage levels of U-235, which is often done through the use of centrifuges — machines that spin a form of unrefined uranium at high speeds.

What’s the concern now?
What makes the enrichment particularly threatening is that the tricky process of enrichment becomes far easier and requires fewer centrifuges as it moves into the higher purities. In other words, getting to 90 percent purity is much easier starting from 20 percent, and easier still starting from 60 percent.
Insta Curious: Do you know about India’s nuclear triad? Reference: read this.

InstaLinks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prelims Link</th>
<th>Mains Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What is JCPOA? Signatories.</td>
<td>Write a note on JCPOA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What is IAEA? Relation with the UN.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Members of IAEA.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Programs of IAEA.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. What is Cord blood banking?

Context:
Cord Blood Banking Services Market was valued at $1,126 mn in 2016, & is estimated to reach at $2,772 mn by 2023, registering a CAGR of 13.8% from 2017 to 2023.

- The rise in awareness related to the benefits of using cord blood stem cells for the treatment of chronic diseases, such as cancer, has led to an increase in the government initiative leading to an increase in number of cord blood banks, which is expected to fuel the market growth of cord blood banking services.

What is Cord Blood?
Cord blood (short for umbilical cord blood) is the blood that remains in the umbilical cord and placenta post-delivery.

- It contains special cells called hematopoietic stem cells that can be used to treat some types of diseases.

What is Cord blood banking?
Cord blood banking is the process of collecting the cord blood and extracting and cryogenically freezing its stem cells and other cells of the immune system for potential future medical use.

- Globally, cord blood banking is recommended as a source of hematopoietic stem cell transplantation for haematological cancers and disorders where its use is recommended.
- For all other conditions, the use of cord blood as a source of stem cells is not yet established.

What Can It Be Used For?
The umbilical cord fluid is loaded with stem cells.

- They can treat cancer, blood diseases like anemia, and some immune system disorders, which disrupt your body’s ability to defend itself.
- The fluid is easy to collect and has 10 times more stem cells than those collected from bone marrow.
- Stem cells from cord blood rarely carry any infectious diseases and are half as likely to be rejected as adult stem cells.

Concerns associated with stem cell banking:

- Over the past decade, stem cell banking has been aggressively marketed even as its use is still in experimental stages. But these companies charge enormous fees from parents to preserve cells.
- The concern here is that it is merely by emotional marketing that companies convince parents to bank the cells for several years promising future therapeutic use.

InstaLinks:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Prelims Link</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. What are stem cells?</td>
<td>4. What is stem cell therapy?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Types of stem cells?</td>
<td>5. Various projects in this regard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Their benefits?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.insightsonindia.com 116 InsightsIAS
Mains Link: What is cord blood? How to be parents are falling prey to the emotional marketing tactics by stem cell banking companies? Discuss. 

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GQK7VVFUS.1&imageview=0.

4. What is UV-C technology?

Context:
UV-C water purification is one of the most effective methods to disinfect water. In this technique, special “germicidal” UV-C lamps, emitting high-intensity ultraviolet light purifies the water without the use of harsh chemicals that are harmful to the environment.

What is UV radiation?
UV radiation is the portion of the Electromagnetic spectrum between X-rays and visible light.

The most common form of UV radiation is sunlight, which produces three main types of UV rays:
1. UVA.
2. UVB.
3. UVC.

Key facts:
● UVA rays have the longest wavelengths, followed by UVB, and UVC rays which have the shortest wavelengths.
● While UVA and UVB rays are transmitted through the atmosphere, all UVC and some UVB rays are absorbed by the Earth’s ozone layer. So, most of the UV rays you come in contact with are UVA with a small amount of UVB.

How is it being used?
UV radiations are normally used to kill microorganisms.
● Particularly, UV-C, also known as Ultraviolet germicidal irradiation (UVGI) is a disinfection method that uses short-wavelength ultraviolet light to kill or inactivate microorganisms by destroying their nucleic acids and disrupting their DNA, leaving them unable to perform vital cellular functions and stops their replication.
● UVGI is used in a variety of applications, such as food, air, and water disinfection.

Is it safe for humans?
Researchers noted that the device was specifically developed to disinfect non-living things. Therefore, UV-C radiation used in this device could be harmful to the skin and eyes of the living beings.

Insta Curious: Did you know that Light is also a form of electromagnetic radiation? What are the other forms of electromagnetic radiation? Read here.

InstaLinks:
1. Overview of electromagnetic spectrum.
2. About UV Rays.
3. Types.
4. Features.

Topics: Awareness in space.

1. NASA’s Perseverance rover:

Context:
NASA’s Perseverance Mars rover has emerged from its first "solar conjunction" blackout and gotten back to work on the Red Planet.

Background:
www.insightsonindia.com 117 InsightsIAS
The car-sized Perseverance and other Mars spacecraft had to stand down for about two weeks recently when the Red Planet slipped behind the sun from Earth’s perspective.

- In this alignment, known as **solar conjunction**, our star can corrupt commands sent from Earth to Mars, so NASA and other space agencies don’t take the chance.

NASA’s Perseverance Mars Rover has made a video of the 13th flight of the **Ingenuity Mars Helicopter** sent by the agency.

**About Perseverance Rover:**

NASA’s Perseverance rover is exploring the **Jezero Crater on Mars** and attempting to collect its first rock samples.

- It was launched in 2020 aboard a United Launch Alliance Atlas V.

**Why is this mission significant?**

1. It carried a unique instrument, **MOXIE or Mars Oxygen ISRU Experiment**: which for the first time manufactured molecular oxygen on Mars using carbon dioxide from the carbon-dioxide-rich atmosphere (ISRU means In Situ Resource Utilization: or the use of local resources to meet human needs or requirements of the spacecraft).
2. It carried **Ingenuity**, the first ever helicopter to fly on Mars.
3. It is the **planned first step to bring back rock samples from Mars** for analysis in sophisticated laboratories on Earth: with the goal of looking for biosignatures: or signatures of present or past life.

These are some of the key mission objectives:

1. Look for signs of ancient microbial life.
2. Collect Martian rock and dust samples for later return to Earth.
3. Deliver an experimental helicopter.
4. Study the climate and geology of Mars.
5. Demonstrate technology for future Mars missions.

**What is the reason for the near-term interest in Mars?**

1. Mars is located in the very near backyard (about 200 million km away).
2. It is a planet that humans can aspire to visit or to stay for a longer duration.
3. Mars had flowing water and an atmosphere in the distant past: and perhaps conditions to support life.
4. It also has implications for commercial travel.

**Insta Curious: Know about Mars in brief** - the history, atmosphere, gravity and explorations

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**

1. Missions to Mars.
2. Perseverance- objectives.
3. Instruments onboard.
4. About the UAE’s Hope and China’s Tianwen-1 spacecraft.

**Mains Link:**

5. Pathfinder mission.
6. About the UAE’s Hope and China’s Tianwen-1 spacecraft.
7. Pathfinder mission.

2. NASA’s **DART mission:**

**Context:**

On November 24, at around 11.50 am (IST), NASA will launch the agency’s first planetary defense test mission named **the Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART).**

- The spacecraft will be launched on a **SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket** from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California.

**About DART Mission:**

www.insightsonindia.com
● The main aim of the mission is to test the newly developed technology that would allow a spacecraft to crash into an asteroid and change its course.
● DART is a low-cost spacecraft, weighing around 610 kg at launch and 550 kg during impact.
● It also carries about 10 kg of xenon which will be used to demonstrate the agency’s new thrusters called **NASA Evolutionary Xenon Thruster—Commercial (NEXT-C)** in space.
● The spacecraft carries a high-resolution imager called **Didymos Reconnaissance and Asteroid Camera for Optical Navigation (DRACO)**. Images from DRACO will be sent to Earth in real-time and will help study the impact site and surface of Dimorphos.
● DART will also carry a small satellite or CubeSat named **LICIACube (Light Italian CubeSat for Imaging of Asteroids)**. LICIACube is expected to capture images of the impact and the impact crater formed as a result of the collision. It can also capture images of any dust cloud formed during the impact.

Which asteroid will be deflected?
The target of the spacecraft is a small moonlet called Dimorphos (Greek for “two forms”). It is about 160-metre in diameter and the spacecraft is expected to collide when it is 11 million kilometres away from Earth.

Dimorphos orbits a larger asteroid named Didymos (Greek for “twin”) which has a diameter of 780 metres.

The plan:
The spacecraft will navigate to the moonlet and intentionally collide with it at a speed of about 6.6 kilometres per second or 24,000 kilometres per hour. The collision is expected to take place between September 26 and October 1, 2022.

Insta Curious: What are potentially hazardous asteroids (PHAs)? Reference: read [this](https://www.insightsonindia.com).

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. What are near earth objects?
2. Classification of asteroids.
3. Why most asteroids are found in the asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter?
4. What are potentially hazardous asteroids? How are they classified?

Mains Link:
Differentiate between meteorite and asteroid.

Link: [https://www.insightsonindia.com](https://www.insightsonindia.com)

3. **James Webb Space Telescope:**

Context:
The launch of the **James Webb Space Telescope**, which astronomers hope will herald a new era of discovery, has been delayed until December 22 after an accident at its launch facility in French Guiana.

About **JWST**:

[www.insightsonindia.com](http://www.insightsonindia.com)
JWST is a joint venture between the US (Nasa), European (Esa) and Canadian space agencies (CSA).

- It is an orbiting infrared observatory that will complement and extend the discoveries of the Hubble Space Telescope, with longer wavelength coverage and greatly improved sensitivity.
- Webb was formerly known as the "Next Generation Space Telescope" (NGST) and it was renamed in 2002 after a former NASA administrator, James Webb.
- It will be a large infrared telescope with an approximately 6.5 meter primary mirror.

Objectives and functions of the telescope:
1. It will look deeper into the cosmos - and thus further back in time - than is possible with Hubble.
2. It will do this with a much bigger mirror (6.5m in diameter versus 2.4m) and instruments that are tuned to the infrared.
3. Scientists hope this set-up can detect the light from the very first population of stars in the Universe to switch on more than 13.5 billion years ago.

Orbit:
- The Hubble Space Telescope orbits around the Earth at an altitude of ~570 km above it.
- Webb will not actually orbit the Earth, instead it will sit at the Earth-Sun L2 Lagrange point, 1.5 million km away.
- At the L2 point Webb's solar shield will block the light from the Sun, Earth, and Moon which will help Webb stay cool, which is very important for an infrared telescope.

Insta Curious: Know more about the Hubble Space Telescope here.

4. Space debris:
Context:
Researchers say that the Earth might soon get Saturn-like rings made entirely out of space junk, but they could be cleaned up using magnets.

What's the issue?
With more countries venturing into space with every passing decade, the problem is simply ballooning out of control and recent events, like the anti-satellite weapons test by Russia, are only exacerbating the problem.
- The debris is now adding to the space junk problem and posing a major risk to the International Space Station (ISS) and the satellites in geostationary orbit.
- The debris also poses a potential threat to the lives of the US, Russian, and Chinese astronauts and cosmonauts currently in space.

What is Space Debris?
Space debris poses a global threat to the continued use of space-based technologies that support critical functions like communication, transport, weather and climate monitoring, remote sensing.
- Predicting collision probability from these space objects is crucial from the national security perspective as well as for the protection of public and private space assets of Indian origin.

Amount of space debris in space:
The real amount of space debris is said to be between 500,000 and one million pieces as current sensor technology cannot detect smaller objects. They all travel at speeds of up to 17,500 mph (28,162 kmph) fast enough for a relatively small piece of orbital debris to damage a satellite or a spacecraft.

**Significance of the Project:**
Outcome of this project will directly support the Indian space sector, valued at $7 billion (Rs 51,334 crore) by providing an operationally flexible, scalable, transparent and indigenous collision probability solution.

**Netra:**
To safeguard its space assets from space debris, **Isro had set up a dedicated Space Situational Awareness (SSA) Control Centre named “Netra”** in Bengaluru last December.

- Netra’s key objective is to monitor, track and protect the national space assets and function as a hub of all SSA activities.
- Only the US, Russia and Europe have similar facilities in place to track space objects and share collision warnings.

### 5. What is PASIPHAE, and why is it important?

**Polar-Areas Stellar-Imaging in Polarisation High-Accuracy Experiment (PASIPHAE)** is an international collaborative sky surveying project.

- Scientists aim to study the polarisation in the light coming from millions of stars.

**Background:**
Polarization is a property of light that represents the direction that the light wave oscillates.

**How will the survey be carried out?**
1. The survey will use two high-tech optical polarimeters to observe the northern and southern skies, simultaneously.
2. It will focus on capturing starlight polarisation of very faint stars that are so far away that polarisation signals from there have not been systematically studied.
3. The distances to these stars will be obtained from measurements of the **GAIA satellite**.
4. By combining these data, astronomers will perform a maiden magnetic field tomography mapping of the interstellar medium of very large areas of the sky using a novel polarimeter instrument known as **WALOP** (Wide Area Linear Optical Polarimeter).

**Significance of the project:**
The theory is that a small fraction of CMB radiation emitted during the universe's rapid inflationary phase should have its fingerprints on a specific kind of polarisation, known technically as **B-mode signals**. These B-modes are theorised to have arisen as a result of powerful gravitational waves seen during inflation. However, these signals have been difficult to isolate because of the enormous amounts of polarised radiation in our own Milky Way, caused by large dust clouds that fill the galaxy.

- In essence, PASIPHAE endeavours to ascertain the effect of these obstacles, so we can, ultimately, learn how things played out in the early universe.

**Insta Curious:** [Know different properties of light here](http://www.insightsonindia.com).

**InstaLinks:**
1. What is polarization?
2. About PASIPHAE.
3. About GAIA Satellite.

**Topics:** Awareness in the fields of IT, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

**1. RBI governor Shaktikanta Das sounds alarm on cryptocurrencies:**

**Context:**
[www.insightsonindia.com](http://www.insightsonindia.com) 121 InsightsIAS
Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Shaktikanta Das has sounded alarm on cryptocurrencies, cautioning investors on the potential pitfalls of the digital currency.

**Concerns raised:** Cryptocurrencies are a very serious concern from a macro economic and financial stability point of view.

The *Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021* will be introduced in the winter session of Parliament.

**Key Provisions:**
- It seeks to regulate cryptocurrency and ostensibly ban all private cryptocurrencies.
- It seeks to create a facilitative framework for creation of the official digital currency to be issued by the Reserve Bank of India.

So far, the precise contours of the Bill are not in the public domain and no public consultations have been held.

**Background:**
After the Supreme Court overturned the RBI’s order, which effectively lifted the ban on cryptocurrency trading in India, the craze in India has grown at a furious rate. Crypto craze remains elevated among Indian investors, especially the retail ones.

**How has the government responded so far?**
- The union government has not yet enacted a law on cryptocurrencies in consultation with industry experts, comments from various officials and ministers.
- After several rounds of caution, the government might largely want to set severe limits on the trading of cryptocurrencies in India in the larger public interest.

**Present status of Cryptocurrencies in India:**
- An inter-ministerial panel on cryptocurrency has recommended that all private cryptocurrencies, except any virtual currencies issued by state, will be prohibited in India.
- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has also raised concerns on the cryptocurrencies traded in the market and conveyed them to the Centre.
- Back in March 2020, the Supreme Court had allowed banks and financial institutions to reinstate services related to cryptocurrencies by setting aside the RBI's 2018 circular that had prohibited them (Based on the ground of "proportionality").

**What are Cryptocurrencies?**
Cryptocurrencies are digital currencies in which encryption techniques are used to regulate the generation of units of currency and verify the transfer of funds, operating independently of a central bank.

Examples: Bitcoin, Ethereum etc.

**Why is the RBI against the use of cryptocurrencies?**
1. **Sovereign guarantee:** Cryptocurrencies pose risks to consumers. They do not have any sovereign guarantee and hence are not legal tender.
2. **Market volatility:** Their speculative nature also makes them highly volatile. For instance, the value of Bitcoin fell from USD 20,000 in December 2017 to USD 3,800 in November 2018.
3. **Risk in security:** A user loses access to their cryptocurrency if they lose their private key (unlike traditional digital banking accounts, this password cannot be reset).
4. **Malware threats:** In some cases, these private keys are stored by technical service providers (cryptocurrency exchanges or wallets), which are prone to malware or hacking.
5. **Money laundering.**

www.insightsonindia.com
SC Garg Committee recommendations (2019):
1. Ban anybody who mines, hold, transact or deal with cryptocurrencies in any form.
2. It recommend a jail term of one to 10 years for exchange or trading in digital currency.
3. It proposed a monetary penalty of up to three times the loss caused to the exchequer or gains made by the cryptocurrency user whichever is higher.
4. However, the panel said that the government should keep an open mind on the potential issuance of cryptocurrencies by the Reserve Bank of India.

Insta Curious: Have you heard about the IOTA Tangle? Reference:

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link: 3. What is Blockchain technology?
Mains Link: What are Cryptocurrencies? Why there is a need for regulation? Discuss.

2. FSSAI releases draft regulations for GM foods:
Context:
The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has released draft regulations for GM foods.

Overview of the Draft:
1. No one can manufacture or sell any food products or food ingredients derived from genetically modified organisms (GMOs) without prior approval.
2. Specifies norms that labs will need to adhere for testing GM foods.
3. The proposed regulations will apply to “Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) or Genetically Engineered Organisms (GEOs) or Living Modified Organism (LMOs) intended for direct use as food or for processing.”
4. The regulations’ ambit will include food products, that may have been made using food ingredient or processing aid derived from GMOs, even if GM content is not present in the end-product.
5. Genetically Modified Organisms or Genetically Engineered Organisms “shall not be used as an ingredient” in infant food products.
6. The draft also proposes labelling norms for food products that contain one per cent or more than one per cent of GMO content.

GMO regulation in India:
The task of regulating GMO levels in imported consumables was initially with the Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) under the Union environment ministry.
- Its role in this was diluted with the enactment of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 and FSSAI was asked to take over approvals of imported goods.

What are Genetically Modified Organism (Transgenic Organism)?
In GMO, genetic material (DNA) is altered or artificially introduced using genetic engineering techniques. Genetic modification involves the mutation, insertion, or deletion of genes.
- Inserted genes usually come from a different organism (e.g. In Bt cotton, Bt genes from bacterium Bacillus thuringiensis are induced).

Genetic modification is done to induce a desirable new trait which does not occur naturally in the species.

GM techniques are used in:
1. Biological and medical research,
2. Production of pharmaceutical drugs,
3. Experimental medicine (e.g. gene therapy),
4. Agriculture (e.g. golden rice, Bt cotton etc.),
5. Genetically modified bacteria to produce the protein insulin,
6. To produce biofuels from some GM bacteria, etc.
3. Internet through LEO satellites:

Context:
OneWeb is considering options to remove one of its broadband satellites from low Earth orbit after it failed following a software issue last year.
- So far, OneWeb has deployed 358 satellites at 1,200 kilometers through 11 launches.

Background:
OneWeb has a partnership formed earlier this year with debris-removal startup Astroscale under ESA’s Sunrise program.

About OneWeb’s LEO internet programme:
OneWeb is a Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite communications operator.
- Using LEO satellites OneWeb seeks to offer connectivity across the UK, Alaska, Northern Europe, Greenland, the Arctic Seas and Canada. The company expects the service to be switched on before the end of the year.
- It calls this programme the ‘Five to 50’ service of offering internet connectivity to all regions north of 50 degrees latitude.

What are the benefits of LEO satellites based internet?
1. LEO satellites are positioned around 500km-2000km from earth, compared to stationary orbit satellites which are approximately 36,000km away.
2. As LEO satellites orbit closer to the earth, they are able to provide stronger signals and faster speeds than traditional fixed-satellite systems.
3. Because signals travel faster through space than through fibre-optic cables, they also have the potential to rival if not exceed existing ground-based networks.

Challenges:
LEO satellites travel at a speed of 27,000 kph and complete a full circuit of the planet in 90-120 minutes. As a result, individual satellites can only make direct contact with a land transmitter for a short period of time thus requiring massive LEO satellite fleets and consequently, a significant capital investment.

Criticisms of LEO satellites:
1. The balance of power has shifted from countries to companies since most of these are private companies run projects. As a result, there are questions related to who regulates these companies, especially given the myriad of nations that contribute to individual projects.
2. Complicated regulatory framework:
3. Stakeholders in these companies are from various countries. Thus it becomes challenging to receive requisite licences to operate in each country.
4. Satellites can sometimes be seen in the night skies which creates difficulties for astronomers as the satellites reflect sunlight to earth, leaving streaks across images.
5. Satellites travelling at a lower orbit can also interrupt the frequency of those orbiting above them.
6. Those objects, colloquially referred to as ‘space junk,’ have the potential to damage spacecraft or collide with other satellites.

Potential:
LEO satellite broadband is preferable in areas that cannot be reached by fibre and spectrum services. The target market will therefore be rural populations and military units operating away from urban areas.

Are there any other similar projects?
OneWeb’s chief competitor is Starlink, a venture led by Elon Musk’s SpaceX. Starlink currently has 1,385 satellites in orbit and has already started beta testing in North America and initiating pre-orders in countries like India.

Insta Curious:
1. How many types of orbit do you know? Check out here.
2. Concept of Space exploration Technology: Do you know What Distributed Spacecraft Autonomy (DSA) is? Read Here
3. Have you heard of SWARM - A space exploration concept? Read Here

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About LEO.
2. Starlink project.

Mains Link: Discuss the Concerns associated with satellite based internet services.

Link: https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/onestarlink-satellites-starlink-project-kuiper-7341366/.

Topics: Conservation related issues, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

1. What is the climate vulnerability index released by CEEW?

Context:
Environmental think tank Council on Energy, Environment and Water has carried a first-of-its-kind district-level climate vulnerability assessment, or Climate Vulnerability Index (CVI).
- Under this, it has analysed 640 districts in India to assess their vulnerability to extreme weather events such as cyclones, floods, heatwaves, droughts, etc.

Findings of the climate vulnerability index:
- Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Bihar are most vulnerable to extreme climate events such as floods, droughts and cyclones in India.
- While 27 Indian states and union territories are vulnerable to extreme climate events, 463 districts out of 640 are vulnerable to extreme weather events.
- Dhemaji and Nagaon in Assam, Khammam in Telangana, Gajapati in Odisha, Vizianagaram in Andhra Pradesh, Sangli in Maharashtra, and Chennai in Tamil Nadu are among India's most climate vulnerable districts.
- More than 80 per cent Indians live in districts vulnerable to climate risks – that is 17 of 20 people in India are vulnerable to climate risks, out of which every five Indians live in areas that are extremely vulnerable.
- North-eastern states are more vulnerable to floods.

How were the districts assessed?
The Index takes into account certain indicators when assessing the preparedness of a state or district.
- These include availability of critical infrastructure like cyclone and flood shelters, government mechanisms in place including updating of disaster management plans, mitigation strategies, standard operating procedures before, during and after an extreme weather event such as how people and livestock are being evacuated or how food is being mobilised and how the administration prevents loss of lives and livelihoods.

Relevance of the Index:
- It helps map critical vulnerabilities and plan strategies to enhance resilience and adapt by climate-proofing communities, economies and infrastructure.
- Instead of looking at climate extremes in isolation, the study looks at the combined risk of hydro-met disasters, which is floods, cyclones and droughts, and their impact.
- The study does not take into consideration other natural disasters such as earthquakes.

What are the recommendations that have been made?

www.insightsonindia.com 125 InsightsIAS
1. Develop a high-resolution **Climate Risk Atlas (CRA)** to map critical vulnerabilities at the district level and better identify, assess, and project chronic and acute risks such as extreme climate events, heat and water stress, crop loss, vector-borne diseases and biodiversity collapse.

2. Establish a **centralised climate-risk commission** to coordinate the environmental de-risking mission.

3. Undertake **climate-sensitivity-led landscape restoration** focused on rehabilitating, restoring, and reintegrating natural ecosystems as part of the developmental process.

4. **Integrate climate risk profiling with infrastructure planning** to increase adaptive capacity.

5. Provide for **climate risk-interlinked adaptation financing** by creating innovative CVI-based financing instruments that integrate climate risks for an effective risk transfer mechanism.

Link: [https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/climate-vulnerability-index-ceew-explained-7593385/](https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/climate-vulnerability-index-ceew-explained-7593385/)

### 2. India will achieve net zero emissions by 2070:

**Context:**
In an effort to battle climate change, PM Modi has made the following announcements at the ongoing **COP26 summit in Glasgow:**

1. India will achieve net zero emissions latest by 2070.
2. By 2030, India will ensure 50% of its energy will be sourced from renewable sources.
3. India will also reduce its carbon emissions until 2030 by a billion tonnes.
4. It will also reduce its emissions intensity per unit of GDP by less than 45%.
5. India would also install systems to generate 500 gigawatt of renewable energy by 2030, a 50 GW increase from its existing target.

**What needs to be done ahead?- Suggestions by India:**
1. In the spirit of climate justice, rich developed countries ought to be providing at least $1 trillion in climate finance to assist developing countries and those most vulnerable.
2. Principles of Equity and Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) and, recognition of the very different national circumstances of countries be respected.
3. Sustainable modes of living being practised in certain traditional communities ought to be made part of school curricula.
4. The lessons from India’s efforts at adaptation in programmes such as Jal Jeevan mission, Swach Bharat mission and mission ujwala ought to be popularized globally.
5. Focus should be on climate adaptation as much as mitigation.

**Which countries have announced net-zero targets?**
1. In 2019, the **New Zealand government** passed the Zero Carbon Act, which committed the country to zero carbon emissions by 2050.
2. **The UK’s** parliament passed legislation requiring the government to reduce the UK’s net emissions of greenhouse gases by 100 per cent.
3. **US president Joe Biden** announced that the country will cut its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 50 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030.
4. **World War Zero** was launched in 2019 to bring together unlikely allies on climate change and with the goal of reaching net-zero carbon emissions in the country by 2050.
5. **The European Union plan “Fit for 55”,** the European Commission has asked all of its 27 member countries to cut emissions by 55 per cent below 1990 levels by 2030.
6. **China** announced that it would become net-zero by the year 2060 and that it would not allow its emissions to peak beyond what they are in 2030.

[www.insightsonindia.com](http://www.insightsonindia.com) 126 InsightsIAS
What does net-zero mean?

Net-zero, which is also referred to as carbon-neutrality, does not mean that a country would bring down its emissions to zero. That would be gross-zero, which means reaching a state where there are no emissions at all, a scenario hard to comprehend.

- Basically, net-zero is a state in which a country’s emissions are compensated by absorption and removal of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

**Insta Curious:** Know what Blue Carbon, Black Carbon and Brown Carbon is? Read Here

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**
- About the Climate Leaders’ Summit.
- What is net-zero?
- Countries committed to net-zero.
- About Paris Agreement.

**Mains Link:**
- Discuss the significance of carbon sinks.

**Link:**[https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GS9957C0N.1&imageview=0](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GS9957C0N.1&imageview=0)

**3. COP26 climate conference:**

**Context:**

The UK will host the COP 26 UN Climate Change Conference from October 31 to November 12.

- This year marks the 26th Conference of Parties (thus the name COP26) and will be held in the Scottish Event Campus in Glasgow.

**What is the Conference of Parties?**

COP comes under the United Nations Climate Change Framework Convention (UNFCCC) which was formed in 1994.

- The UNFCCC was established to work towards “stabilisation of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere.”
- COP members have been meeting every year since 1995 (COP1 was held in 1995 in Berlin).

It laid out a list of responsibilities for the member states which included:

1. Formulating measures to mitigate climate change.
2. Cooperating in preparing for adaptation to the impact of climate change.
3. Promoting education, training and public awareness related to climate change.

According to the UNFCCC, COP26 will work towards four goals:

1. Secure **global net-zero by mid-century and keep 1.5 degrees within reach.**
2. **Adapt to protect communities and natural habitats.**
3. **Mobilise finance:** To deliver on our first two goals, developed countries must make good on their promise to mobilise at least $100bn in climate finance per year by 2020.
4. **‘Finalise the Paris Rulebook’**: Leaders will work together to frame a list of detailed rules that will help fulfil the Paris Agreement.

**About UNFCCC:**

The UNFCCC was adopted in **1992 at the Rio Earth Summit**, which marked the beginning of the international community’s first concerted effort to confront the problem of climate change.

- Known also as the Rio Convention, the UNFCCC established a framework for action to stabilise concentrations of greenhouse gases in the earth’s atmosphere.
- The UNFCCC entered into force in 1994, and nearly all of the world’s nations have now signed on.
● It is the parent treaty of the 2015 Paris Agreement. It is also the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol.

Insta Curious: The eleventh and first ever virtual Petersberg Climate Dialogue was held on April 28th 2020. What was it about? Reference: read this.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. What is UNFCCC?
2. What is Copenhagen summit?
3. Who organises Petersberg Climate Dialogue?
4. What is COP?


4. Feasibility of a blanket ban on firecrackers:

Context:
The Supreme Court has said a blanket ban on firecrackers may not be possible.
- The Court was setting aside a Calcutta High Court order which had ordered a complete ban on firecrackers on October 29.

What has the Supreme Court said?
1. Strengthen the mechanism to stop misuse.
2. Measures ought to be in place to prevent the use of toxic chemicals in firecrackers.
3. Chief Secretaries, top administrative and police officials would be held personally liable if banned varieties of firecrackers were found to be used in any of the States (Supreme Court’s 29th October order).

The judgment (Arjun Gopal Case):
The court’s October 23, 2018 judgment banned the sale and production of firecrackers in Delhi-NCR and regulated the use of firecrackers across the country.
- Barium-based firecrackers were specifically banned.
- Online sale of firecrackers has been completely banned.

The verdict had come in response to a plea seeking a ban on manufacturing and sale of firecrackers across the country to curb air pollution.

Recent observations made by the Supreme Court on the use of firecrackers:
- The Supreme Court said it cannot infringe the right to life of other citizens "under the guise of employment of few" while considering a ban on firecrackers.
- Have to strike a balance between employment, unemployment and right to life.

How do firecrackers work?
Firecrackers use fuel and oxidisers to produce a combustion reaction, and the resulting explosion spreads the material in a superheated state. The metal salts in the explosive mix get ‘excited’ and emit light.

What is the controversy?
Metals in the mix, which have a varying arrangement of electrons in shells outside their nucleus, produce different wavelengths of light in this reaction, generating spectacular colours. But as many studies show, the burning of firecrackers is an unusual and peak source of pollution, made up of particles and gases.
● One study in Milan, Italy, quantified the increase in the levels of several elements in the air in one hour as 120 times for Strontium, 22 times for Magnesium, 12 times for Barium, 11 times for Potassium and six times for Copper.

● The Central Pollution Control Board conducted a study in Delhi in 2016, and found that the levels of Aluminium, Barium, Potassium, Sulphur, Iron and Strontium rose sharply on Deepavali night, from low to extremely high.

● Similar episodic spikes have been recorded in China and the U.K. Pollution from firecrackers affects the health of people and animals, and aggravates the already poor ambient air quality in Indian cities. This has resulted in litigation calling for a total ban on firecrackers, and court orders to restrict the type of chemicals used as well as their volume. Many crackers also violate legal limits on sound.

**Can green crackers make a difference?**
The Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, through its National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (CSIR-NEERI), Nagpur, has come out with firecrackers that have “reduced emission light and sound” and 30% less particulate matter using Potassium Nitrate as oxidant.

● These crackers are named Safe Water Releaser, which minimises Potassium Nitrate and Sulphur use, but matches the sound intensity of conventional crackers, Safe Minimal Aluminium, where Aluminium use is low and Safe Thermite Crackers with low Sulphur and Potassium Nitrate.

**Need of the hour:**
While deciding on a ban on firecrackers, it is imperative to take into account the fundamental right of livelihood of firecracker manufacturers and the right to health of over 1.3 billion people of the country.

**Insta Curious:**
Do you know what gives colour to the firecrackers? Reference: read this.

**InstaLinks:**
**Prelims Link:**
1. What are Green Crackers?
2. Main products used in their manufacturing.
3. What gives colour to the firecrackers?

**Mains Link:**
What are Green Crackers? Discuss their significance.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GS9957BUK.1&imageview=0.

5. **Bottom trawling and associated issues:**

**Context:**
The Indian High Commissioner in Colombo has assured Sri Lanka’s northern fishermen that he would convey their concerns over **bottom trawling** by Indian fishermen in the Palk Strait to both New Delhi and Tamil Nadu and look at some immediate measures to address the problem.

**What’s the issue now?**
The Indian side had agreed twice — in 2010 and 2016 — to phase out and end the practice of bottom trawling. But it has not ended yet.

**What is the issue with Bottom trawling?**
Bottom trawling, an ecologically destructive practice, involves trawlers dragging weighted nets along the sea-floor, causing great depletion of aquatic resources.

● Bottom trawling captures juvenile fish, thus exhausting the ocean’s resources and affecting marine conservation efforts. This practice was started by Tamil Nadu fishermen in Palk Bay and actively pursued at the peak of the civil war in Sri Lanka.
Solution to the bottom trawling- deep-sea fishing plan:
The solution to the bottom trawling issue lies in transition from trawling to deep-sea fishing.
- The activity of catching fish that live in the deep parts of the sea/ocean is called deep-sea fishing.
- The boats are designed in such a way that fishermen get access to the deeper parts of the ocean and fish species.
- It is practiced worldwide, especially in the coastal areas with no ecological damage.
- The depth of water should be at least 30 meters to be considered a deep sea fishing zone.

Effects by Government- the Palk Bay scheme:
- Launched in July 2017 under the Blue Revolution programme.
- The scheme is financed by the Union and the State Governments with beneficiary participation.
- It had envisaged the provision of 2,000 vessels in three years to the fishermen of the State and motivate them to abandon bottom trawling.

6. Ganga Mission in Guinness records:
Context:
The National Mission for Clean Ganga has set a Guinness World Record on the first day of the Ganga Utsav for the highest number of photos of handwritten notes uploaded on Facebook in an hour.

Background:
The event was held to raise awareness on Ganga rejuvenation and to expand the reach of the festival. People posted poems or articles on ‘Maa Ganga’ on the Namami Gange Facebook page.

National Mission for Clean Ganga policy document on the conservation of river Ganga:
1. Cities situated on Ganga river banks will have to incorporate river conservation plans when they prepare their Master Plans.
2. These “river-sensitive” plans must be practical and consider questions of encroachment and land ownership.
3. There is a need for a systematic rehabilitation plan for such encroaching entities that emphasizes alternative livelihood options in addition to a relocation strategy.
4. The Master Plan shouldn’t mandate specific technologies, but it can “create an environment” for facilitating the use of state-of-the-art technologies (without naming the providers) for river management.

Applicability:
The recommendations are currently for towns that are on the main stem of the river Ganga. There are 97 of them encompassing 5 States — Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal.

About the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG):
It was registered as a society on 12th August 2011 under the Societies Registration Act 1860. It acted as the implementation arm of National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) which was constituted under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act (EPA),1986.
- Please note, NGRBA was dissolved with effect from the 7th October 2016, consequent to the constitution of the National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection and Management of River Ganga (referred as National Ganga Council).
Some facts related to Ganges:
1. Ganga is the third largest river in the world by discharge.
2. The mouth of River Ganga forms the world’s largest delta, known as Sunderbans, and was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1997.

Insta Curious: Do you know about MITRAS – FRIENDS OF THE GANGES? Read Here

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Composition of NGC.
2. About NGRBA.
3. What is NMCG?
5. World Bank group.

Mains Link:
Discuss the roles and functions of NMCG.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GS99579IM.1&imageview=0.

7. Infrastructure for Resilient Island States:

Context:
This initiative has been launched by India for developing the infrastructure of small island nations vulnerable to climate change.
- The new initiative is the result of cooperation between India, the U.K. and Australia and included the participation of leaders of small island nations such as Fiji, Jamaica and Mauritius.

Implementation:
The IRIS initiative is a part of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) that would focus on building capacity, having pilot projects, especially in small island developing states.

Need for:
- The last few decades have proved that no one is untouched by the wrath of climate change. Whether they are developed countries or countries rich in natural resources, this is a big threat to everyone. But, Small Island Developing States (SIDS) face the biggest threat from climate change.
- One-third of the entire population of SIDS lives on lands that are less than five metres below the sea level. This makes them highly vulnerable to sea-level rise, storm surge and coastal destruction.
- These countries contribute to only 1 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions, and yet are among the first to experience the worst impacts of climate change.
- Agricultural production, fisheries, and related sectors are declining as the climate changes, threatening livelihoods and economic growth. In addition, extreme weather spawned by climate change is destroying SIDS land, real estate and infrastructure, with economically catastrophic effects.

About CDRI:
- Launched by Modi in September 2019 at the UN Secretary-General’s Climate Action Summit in New York, US.
- It is 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.
- So far, 25 other countries, including Germany, Italy, Japan, Australia, and the United States have joined this coalition.
- CDRI is the second international collaboration set up by India in the climate change sphere, the other being the International Solar Alliance that has now evolved to the status of a “treaty-based” intergovernmental organisation.

Small Island Developing States:
Small Island Developing States (SIDS) are a distinct group of 38 UN Member States and 20 Non-UN Members/Associate Members of United Nations regional commissions that face unique social, economic and environmental vulnerabilities.

The SIDS were recognized as a distinct group of developing countries in June 1992, at the UN Conference on Environment and Development.

SIDS’ unique and particular vulnerabilities are highlighted in “The Future We Want”, adopted at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (also known as Rio+20) that took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 2012.

The geographical regions in which SIDS are located are the Caribbean, the Pacific, and the AIS (Atlantic, Indian Ocean and South China Sea).

The Barbados Programme of Action was produced in 1994 in order to assist the SIDS in their sustainable development efforts.

The United Nations Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States (UN-OHRLLS) represent this group of states.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G5T95BC7I.1&imageview=0

8. The ‘Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Rights Act)’:

Context:
The President of India has empowered (under clause (1) of Article 239 of the Constitution) the Lieutenant Governor of Ladakh to exercise the powers and discharge the functions of the State Government under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 within the Union territory.

About the Forest Rights Act:
The Act passed in 2006 grants legal recognition to the rights of traditional forest dwelling communities.

Rights under the Act:
Title rights - i.e. ownership - to land that is being farmed by tribals or forest dwellers as on 13 December 2005, subject to a maximum of 4 hectares; ownership is only for land that is actually being cultivated by the concerned family as on that date, meaning that no new lands are granted.

Use rights - to minor forest produce (also including ownership), to grazing areas, to pastoralist routes, etc.

Relief and development rights - to rehabilitation in case of illegal eviction or forced displacement; and to basic amenities, subject to restrictions for forest protection.

Forest management rights - to protect forests and wildlife.

Eligibility criteria:
According to Section 2(c) of Forest Rights Act (FRA), to qualify as Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribe (FDST) and be eligible for recognition of rights under FRA, three conditions must be satisfied by the applicant/s, who could be “members or community”:
1. Must be a Scheduled Tribe in the area where the right is claimed; and
2. Primarily resided in forest or forests land prior to 13-12-2005; and
3. Depend on the forest or forests land for bonafide livelihood needs.

And to qualify as Other Traditional Forest Dweller (OTFD) and be eligible for recognition of rights under FRA, two conditions need to be fulfilled:
1. Primarily resided in forest or forests land for three generations (75 years) prior to 13-12-2005.
2. Depend on the forest or forests land for bonafide livelihood needs.

Process of recognition of rights:
1. The gram sabha, or village assembly, will initially pass a resolution recommending whose rights to which resources should be recognised.

www.insightsonindia.com 132 InsightsIAS
2. This resolution is then screened and approved at the level of the sub-division (or taluka) and subsequently at the district level.

The screening committees consist of three government officials (Forest, Revenue and Tribal Welfare departments) and three elected members of the local body at that level. These committees also hear appeals.

Insta Curious: Do you know about Critical Wildlife Habitats which are defined under the Forest Rights Act, 2006? Read this.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. Who can include or exclude areas under 5th schedule?
2. What are scheduled areas?
3. Forest Rights Act- key provisions.
4. Rights under this Act.
5. Eligibility Criteria.
6. Role of Gram Sabha in recognizing these rights
7. What are Critical Wildlife Habitats?

9. Stubble Burning and its impact on health:

Context:
A study was conducted recently in six villages of Patiala, Punjab on Stubble Burning and impacts on health.

Key findings of the study:
1. Pollution from stubble burning significantly reduced lung function and was particularly harmful to rural women.
2. The concentrations of PM2.5, the category of unburnt carbon particles considered most harmful to respiratory health, was found to increase more than twice between the two phases, from 100 g/m3 to 250 g/m3.
3. During the crop residue burning period, a two to three-fold increase was noted in most of the respiratory symptoms including wheezing, breathlessness on exertion, cough in morning, cough at night, skin rashes, runny nose or itchiness of eyes etc. across all age groups (10-60 years).
4. The highest number of respiratory complaints were reported by the elderly population (>40-60) and the lowest in the younger age group (10-18) during crop burning period.
5. There was decline in lung function with increase in PM2.5 concentration across all age groups even after controlling for several other exposure variables, such the influence of cooking fuel, ventilation, distance from road etc.

What is stubble burning?
It is a common practice followed by farmers to prepare fields for sowing of wheat in November as there is little time left between the harvesting of paddy and sowing of wheat.

Impact: Stubble burning results in emission of harmful gases such carbon dioxide, sulphur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide along with particulate matter.

Why farmers opt for stubble burning?
1. They do not have alternatives for utilising them effectively.
2. The farmers are ill-equipped to deal with waste because they cannot afford the new technology that is available to handle the waste material.
3. With less income due to crop damage, farmers are likely to be inclined to light up their fields to cut costs and not spend on scientific ways of stubble management.

Advantages of stubble burning:
● It quickly clears the field and is the cheapest alternative.
● Kills weeds, including those resistant to herbicide.
● Kills slugs and other pests.
Can reduce nitrogen tie-up.

Effects of Stubble Burning:
- Pollution: Open stubble burning emits large amounts of toxic pollutants in the atmosphere which contain harmful gases like methane (CH4), Carbon Monoxide (CO), Volatile organic compound (VOC) and carcinogenic polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. They may eventually cause smog.
- Soil Fertility: Burning husk on ground destroys the nutrients in the soil, making it less fertile.
- Heat Penetration: Heat generated by stubble burning penetrates into the soil, leading to the loss of moisture and useful microbes.

Alternative solutions that can avoid Stubble Burning:
1. Promote paddy straw-based power plants. It will also create employment opportunities.
2. Incorporation of crop residues in the soil can improve soil moisture and help activate the growth of soil microorganisms for better plant growth.
3. Convert the removed residues into enriched organic manure through composting.
4. New opportunities for industrial use such as extraction of yeast protein can be explored through scientific research.

What needs to be done- Supreme Court’s observations?
1. Incentives could be provided to those who are not burning the stubble and disincentives for those who continue the practice.
2. The existing Minimum Support Price (MSP) Scheme must be so interpreted as to enable the States concerned to wholly or partly deny the benefit of MSP to those who continue to burn the crop residue.

Chhattisgarh Model:
An innovative experiment has been undertaken by the Chhattisgarh government by setting up gauthans.
- A gauthan is a dedicated five-acre plot, held in common by each village, where all the unused stubble is collected through parali daan (people’s donations) and is converted into organic fertiliser by mixing with cow dung and few natural enzymes.
- The scheme also generates employment among rural youth.
- The government supports the transportation of parali from the farm to the nearest gauthan.
- The state has successfully developed 2,000 gauthans.

Insta Curious: Do you know about Pusa, a stubble burning solution? Reference: read this.
Do you know about the WHO prescribed air quality standards?

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About EPCA.
2. About NGT.
3. About CPCB.

Mains Link: Why was EPCA dissolved? What has replaced EPCA? Discuss.

10. Extinction risk for leopards in North India:
Context:
An international study we conducted that quantifies the threat posed by roads to the survival of animal populations around the world.

Key findings related to India:
- The leopard faces an 83% increased risk of extinction in North India due to roadkill.
- The leopard population of North India is at highest risk among four animal populations identified as being the most vulnerable to extinction in the next 50 years if observed roadkill levels persist.
Leopard is followed by the maned wolf and the little spotted cat, both of Brazil, and the brown hyena of southern Africa.

At an 83% increased risk, the study estimates the time to the North Indian leopard population’s extinction at 33 years.

**Report on Leopards in India:**

In August 2021, the Union Environment Ministry released a new report titled- **Status of Leopards, Co-predators and Megaherbivores-2018.**

The report was released on July 29, 2021 — World Tiger Day.

As per the report:

- India’s official leopard count has increased 63 per cent from 2014-2018. There were 12,852 leopards in the country in 2018 (7,910 in 2014).
- The largest number of leopards have been estimated in Madhya Pradesh (3,421) followed by Karnataka (1,783) and Maharashtra (1,690).

**About Leopard:**

1. **Scientific Name**- Panthera pardus.
2. Listed in **Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.**
3. Included in **Appendix I of CITES.**
4. Listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.
5. **Nine subspecies of the leopard** have been recognized, and they are distributed across Africa and Asia.

**Insta Curious:** Did you know that the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) recognises roadkill as a threat to 10 mammalian species? What are the other threats?

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**

1. IUCN status of Leopard.
2. What is CITES?
3. Subspecies of leopard.
5. Tiger census in India is conducted by?
6. IUCN red list categories.

**Mains Link:**

Discuss why a separate census is necessary for the estimation of leopards in India.

**Link:**


### 11. What is the Global Methane Pledge?

**Context:**

The Global Methane Pledge was launched at the UN COP26 climate conference in Glasgow.

- It is an effort led jointly by the United States and the European Union.
- So far, over 90 countries have signed this pledge.

**About the Global Methane Pledge:**

1. The pledge was first announced in September by the US and EU, and is essentially an agreement to reduce global methane emissions.

Methane is a major contributor to global warming

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contribution to warming in degrees Celsius</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carbon dioxide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volatile organic compounds*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Halogenated gases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black carbon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nitrous oxide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aviation contrails</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figures are for contributions to 2010-2019 warming relative to 1850-1900

*Volatile organic compounds and carbon monoxide
2. One of the central aims of this agreement is to cut down methane emissions by up to 30 per cent from 2020 levels by the year 2030.

Need for limiting the methane emissions:
- Methane is the second-most abundant greenhouse gas in the atmosphere, after carbon dioxide, and, therefore, pledges related to cutting down its emissions are significant.
- According to the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report, methane accounts for about half of the 1.0 degrees Celsius net rise in global average temperature since the pre-industrial era.
- Rapidly reducing methane emissions is complementary to action on carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, and is regarded as the single most effective strategy to reduce global warming in the near term and keep the goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach.

Why is dealing with methane important for climate change?
- According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), while methane has a much shorter atmospheric lifetime (12 years as compared to centuries for CO2), it is a much more potent greenhouse gas simply because it absorbs more energy while it is in the atmosphere.
- In its factsheet on methane, the UN notes that methane is a powerful pollutant and has a global warming potential that is 80 times greater than carbon dioxide, about 20 years after it has been released into the atmosphere.
- Significantly, the average methane leak rate of 2.3 per cent “erodes much of the climate advantage gas has over coal”.
- The IEA has also said that more than 75 per cent of methane emissions can be mitigated with the technology that exists today, and that up to 40 per cent of this can be done at no additional costs.

Sources of human-caused methane emissions:
- Most human-caused methane emissions came from three sectors: Fossil fuels, waste and agriculture.
- Oil and gas extraction, processing and distribution accounted for 23 per cent of methane emissions in the fossil fuel sector. Coal mining accounted for 12 per cent of emissions.
- Landfills and wastewater made up about 20 per cent of emissions in the waste sector. In the agricultural sector, livestock emissions from manure and enteric fermentation constituted for roughly 32 per cent and rice cultivation eight per cent of emissions.
Mitigation potential varied between countries and regions:
- Europe had the greatest potential to curb methane emissions from farming, fossil fuel operations and waste management.
- India had the greatest potential to reduce methane emissions in the waste sector. China’s mitigation potential was best in coal production and livestock, while Africa’s was in livestock, followed by oil and gas.
- The fossil fuel industry had the greatest potential for low-cost methane cuts.

Suggestions:
1. Human-caused methane emissions must be cut by 45 per cent to avoid the worst effects of climate change.
2. Such a cut would prevent a rise in global warming by up to 0.3 degrees Celsius by 2045.
3. It would also prevent 260,000 premature deaths, 775,000 asthma-related hospital visits annually, as well as 25 million tonnes of crop losses.

Three behavioural changes — reducing food waste and loss, improving livestock management and adopting healthy diets (vegetarian or with a lower meat and dairy content) — could reduce methane emissions by 65–80 million tonnes per year over the next few decades.

Insta Curious: Do you know about the anti-Methanogenic Feed Supplement; Harit Dhara? Reference: read this.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. What is methane? How is it produced?
2. What is methane hydrate?
3. Coalbed methane vs Shale gas.
4. What is coalification?
5. Greenhouse gases emitted during CBM extraction?

Mains Link: Discuss steps taken by India to reduce methane emissions.
Link: https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/global-methane-pledge-explained-7605172/.

12. Climate Change Performance Index:
Context:
The 17th edition of the Climate Change Performance Index was released recently.

About CCPI:
- It is compiled by Germanwatch, the New Climate Institute, and the Climate Action Network.
- It monitors climate mitigation progress of 60 countries and the European Union.
- It aims to enhance transparency in international climate politics and enables the comparability of climate protection efforts and progress made by individual countries.

Methodology:
Methodological approach and data sources
The CCPI assesses countries’ performance in four categories:

www.insightsonindia.com 137 InsightsIAS
● “GHG Emissions” (40% of overall score).
● “Renewable Energy” (20% of overall score).
● “Energy Use” (20% of overall score).
● “Climate Policy” (20% of overall score).

Performance of various countries in the latest index:
● The first three ranks of the overall rankings were kept empty because no country had performed well enough in all index categories to achieve an overall very high rating.
● The first three ranks in the greenhouse gas emissions category, too, were kept empty.
● In terms of greenhouse gas emissions, Sweden, Egypt, Chile and the UK are in the top 7.
● Scandinavian countries such as Sweden achieved the best results because of their “outstanding” effort on renewable energy. Iran and Russia are ranked the lowest in this category.
● Overall, Australia, South Korea and Russia and the United States are among the lowest performing countries along with Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia.
● China is ranked 37 overall and has an overall rating of “low”.

Performance of India:
● In the overall rankings, India is at number 10 with a score of 69.22. It is a high performer except in the renewable energy category, in which it is ranked “medium”.
● The report says that India is benefiting from its relatively low per-capita emissions.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About CCPI.
2. Features.
3. Criteria.
4. Performance of various countries.

Mains Link: Concerns for India, areas for improvement and the need for the government’s active involvement in controlling climate change.


13. What causes frothing in Delhi’s Yamuna?

Context:
In what has become a repeat occurrence in the city, a layer of froth was seen floating over parts of the Yamuna river near Kalindi Kunj recently, with Chhath devotees standing in toxic foam-laden water to offer prayers.

● The froth is a sign of a polluted river.

What causes frothing in the Yamuna?
● The release of untreated or poorly treated effluents, including sewage from those parts of the city that are not connected to the sewerage network and industrial waste, could lead to frothing.
● Surfactants and phosphates from detergents in households and industrial laundry find their way into the river, as all the sewage is not treated.

Reasons for foaming around this time of the year:
The river is in a lean phase and the water flow is less. Pollutants, therefore, are not diluted. The turbulence at the barrage near Okhla generates foam from the phosphates.

Why is Yamuna so polluted?
1. The sewage treatment plants of Delhi are major contributors of the Pollutants being discharged in the river.
2. Pollutants discharge from different types of industry is also a major issue.
3. Agriculture activities along the banks of the river in Delhi contributes to river pollution.
4. Agricultural waste and pesticide discharge from the Haryana field also contributes to the pollution.
5. The low volume of water flow in the river causes the pollutants to accumulate and raise the pollution level.

About Yamuna River:
- The river Yamuna is a major tributary of river Ganges.
- Originates from the Yamunotri glacier near Bandarpouchn peaks in the Mussoorie range of the lower Himalayas in Uttarkashi district of Uttarakhand.
- It meets the Ganges at the Sangam in Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh after flowing through Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and Delhi.
- Tributaries: Chambal, Sindh, Betwa and Ken.

Insta Curious:
Did you know that the Article 21, the right to clean the environment, and further, pollution-free water, has been protected under the broad rubric of the right to life?

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?
4. Permissible level of Sulfate.
5. Desirable limit of hardness of water.
6. The desirable level of faecal coliform.


14. Green Bonds:
Context:
Corporate green-bond issuance has reached new highs as U.S. companies including chip maker Micron Technology Inc., retailer Walmart Inc. and data-center company Equinix Inc. add the bonds as part of larger traditional bond offerings.

Need for:
- The increasing issuance of green bonds, which finance environmentally friendly projects, comes as companies face pressure from investors, regulators and employees to show the steps they are taking to improve the environment. One way they do that is by issuing debt tied to sustainability targets.

State Bank of India, the country’s largest commercial bank, has dual listed its $650 million green bonds simultaneously on the India International Exchange (India INX) and Luxembourg Stock Exchange (LuxSE). This dual listing is in line with this year’s topic of World Investor Week, ‘Sustainable Finance’, as indicated by the regulatory body International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA).

What Is a Green Bond?
A green bond is a type of fixed-income instrument that is specifically earmarked to raise money for climate and environmental projects.

These bonds are typically asset-linked and backed by the issuing entity's balance sheet, so they usually carry the same credit rating as their issuers’ other debt obligations.

- Green bonds may come with tax incentives to enhance their attractiveness to investors.
- The World Bank is a major issuer of green bonds. It has issued 164 such bonds since 2008, worth a combined $14.4 billion. In 2020, the total issuance of green bonds was worth almost $270 billion, according to the Climate Bond Initiative.
How Does a Green Bond Work?

Green bonds work just like any other corporate or government bond.
- Borrowers issue these securities in order to secure financing for projects that will have a positive environmental impact, such as ecosystem restoration or reducing pollution.
- Investors who purchase these bonds can expect to make as the bond matures.
- In addition, there are often tax benefits for investing in green bonds.

Green Bonds Vs Blue Bonds:

Blue bonds are sustainability bonds to finance projects that protect the ocean and related ecosystems.
- This can include projects to support sustainable fisheries, protection of coral reefs and other fragile ecosystems, or reducing pollution and acidification.
- All blue bonds are green bonds, but not all green bonds are blue bonds.

Green Bonds Vs Climate Bonds:

"Green bonds" and "climate bonds" are sometimes used interchangeably, but some authorities use the latter term specifically for projects focusing on reducing carbon emissions or alleviating the effects of climate change.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. About Green Bonds.
2. How do they operate?
3. Features.

Mains Link:
4. How are they different from Blue Bonds.

Discuss the significance of Green Bonds.

15. **Fly Ash:**

Context:
Activists and fishermen have complained about fly ash making its way into the Kosathchalaiyar from the North Chennai Thermal Power Station (NCTPS). This was due to a leak in the pipeline carrying ash to the ash pond.

What is Fly Ash?

Popularly known as Flue ash or pulverised fuel ash, it is a coal combustion product.

Composition:
Composed of the particulates that are driven out of coal-fired boilers together with the flue gases.
- Depending upon the source and composition of the coal being burned, the components of fly ash vary considerably, but all fly ash includes substantial amounts of silicon dioxide (SiO2), aluminium oxide (Al2O3) and calcium oxide (CaO), the main mineral compounds in coal-bearing rock strata.
- Minor constituents include: arsenic, beryllium, boron, cadmium, chromium, hexavalent chromium, cobalt, lead, manganese, mercury, molybdenum, selenium, strontium, thallium, and vanadium, along with very small concentrations of dioxins and PAH compounds. It also has unburnt carbon.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Composition (wt %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SiO2</td>
<td>18.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al2O3</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fe2O3</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na2O</td>
<td>0.988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CaO</td>
<td>1.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K2O</td>
<td>2.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TiO2</td>
<td>0.468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SO3</td>
<td>0.366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MgO</td>
<td>0.348</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SiO2/Al2O3</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Health and environmental hazards:

Toxic heavy metals present: All the heavy metals found in fly ash nickel, cadmium, arsenic, chromium, lead, etc—are toxic in nature. They are minute, poisonous particles accumulate in the respiratory tract, and cause gradual poisoning.

Radiation: For an equal amount of electricity generated, fly ash contains a hundred times more radiation than nuclear waste secured via dry cask or water storage.

Water pollution: The breaching of ash dykes and consequent ash spills occur frequently in India, polluting a large number of water bodies.
Effects on environment: The destruction of mangroves, drastic reduction in crop yields, and the pollution of groundwater in the Rann of Kutch from the ash sludge of adjoining Coal power plants has been well documented.

However, fly ash can be used in the following ways:
1. Concrete production, as a substitute material for Portland cement, sand.
2. Fly-ash pellets which can replace normal aggregate in concrete mixture.
3. Embankments and other structural fills.
4. Cement clinker production – (as a substitute material for clay).
5. Stabilization of soft soils.
6. Road subbase construction.
7. As aggregate substitute material (e.g. for brick production).
8. Agricultural uses: soil amendment, fertilizer, cattle feeders, soil stabilization in stock feed yards, and agricultural stakes.
9. Loose application on rivers to melt ice.
10. Loose application on roads and parking lots for ice control.

Insta Curious: During coal combustion, large amounts of ash are created along with carbon dioxide and other gases. The fine particle ash that rises up with the flue gases is known as fly or flue ash while the heavier ash that does not rise is called bottom ash; collectively these are known as coal ash. Know more about this process, here.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link: 4. Potential applications.
Mains Link:
- What is fly ash? What are its effects on human health and environment?

16. National Green Tribunal (NGT):
Context:
The National Green Tribunal (NGT), Eastern Zone, has imposed a fine of ₹2 crore on the Jindal Steel and Power Limited (JSPL) for changing the natural course of Kurbadahali Nalla (water channel) in Odisha’s Angul district.

What’s the issue?
A complaint filed with NGT said that the JSPL had unauthorisedly usurped the Nandira River in Angul in connivance with the State authorities and filled it up with earth thereby completely obliterating the river.

About NGT:
- Established on 18th October, 2010 under the National Green Tribunal Act 2010.
- Established for effective and expeditious disposal of cases relating to environmental protection and conservation of forests and other natural resources.
- New Delhi is the Principal Place of Sitting of the Tribunal and Bhopal, Pune, Kolkata and Chennai shall be the other four places of sitting of the Tribunal.
- The Tribunal is not bound by the procedure laid down under the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908, but shall be guided by principles of natural justice.
- NGT is mandated to make disposal of applications or appeals finally within 6 months of filing of the same.

With the establishment of the NGT, India became the third country in the world to set up a specialised environmental tribunal, only after Australia and New Zealand, and the first developing country to do so.
Sanctioned strength: The act allows for up to 40 members (20 expert members and 20 judicial members).
Chairman: Is the administrative head of the tribunal, also serves as a judicial member and is required to be a serving or retired Chief Justice of a High Court or a judge of the Supreme Court of India.
Selection:
1. Members are chosen by a selection committee (headed by a sitting judge of the Supreme Court of India) that reviews their applications and conducts interviews.
2. The Judicial members are chosen from applicants who are serving or retired judges of High Courts.
3. Expert members are chosen from applicants who are either serving or retired bureaucrats not below the rank of an Additional Secretary to the Government of India (not below the rank of Principal Secretary if serving under a state government) with a minimum administrative experience of five years in dealing with environmental matters. Or, the expert members must have a doctorate in a related field.

InstaLinks:
Prelims Link:
1. About NGT.
2. Composition.
3. Functions.
4. Key judgements.
Mains Link:
Discuss the roles and functions of NGT.

Topics: Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.

1. Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA):
Context:
The Editors Guild of India (EGI) has expressed shock over the Tripura police’s action of booking 102 people, including journalists, under Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. This was for reporting and writing on the recent communal violence in the State.

A Special Bench of the Supreme Court, led by Chief Justice of India N.V. Ramana, recently protected two lawyers and a journalist booked under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) from any “coercive action” by the Tripura police.

What’s the issue?
The lawyers had led a fact-finding mission and released a report on the “targeted political violence against Muslim minorities in the State” in October and the journalist had tweeted “Tripura is burning”. Following this a FIR was lodged against them.

What’s the concern now?
The petitioners have argued that the State of Tripura was “monopolising the flow of information and facts emanating from the affected areas by invoking the UAPA” against members of civil society, including advocates and journalists, who have made the effort to bring facts in relation to the targeted violence in the public domain”.

Need of the hour:
The petitioners have asked the court to restrict the vague and wide definition given to what amounts to “unlawful activity” under the UAPA. The definition gave a free hand to the State to crush dissent and free speech with the threat of UAPA, it argued.
- Also, Anticipatory bail was barred under the UAPA and the possibility of bail was remote.

About the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act:
Passed in 1967, the law aims at effective prevention of unlawful activities associations in India.
The Act assigns absolute power to the central government, by way of which if the Centre deems an activity as unlawful then it may, by way of an Official Gazette, declare it so.
- It has death penalty and life imprisonment as highest punishments.
Key points:
Under UAPA, both Indian and foreign nationals can be charged.
- It will be applicable to the offenders in the same manner, even if crime is committed on a foreign land, outside India.
- Under the UAPA, the investigating agency can file a charge sheet in maximum 180 days after the arrests and the duration can be extended further after intimating the court.

As per amendments of 2019:
- The Act empowers the Director General of National Investigation Agency (NIA) to grant approval of seizure or attachment of property when the case is investigated by the said agency.
- The Act empowers the officers of the NIA, of the rank of Inspector or above, to investigate cases of terrorism in addition to those conducted by the DSP or ACP or above rank officer in the state.
- It also included the provision of designating an individual as a terrorist.

Issues associated:
UAPA is criticized by the civil society as antithetical to constitutional freedom to dissent, rule of law and fair trial.

Associated Issues:
2. Denial of Bail.
3. Pendency of Trails.
4. State Overreach.
5. Undermines federalism.

Delhi High Court defines the contours of UAPA:
In June 2021, delivering a judgment defining the contours of the otherwise "vague" Section 15 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, (UAPA), the Delhi High Court laid down some important principles upon the imposition of Section 15, 17 & 18 of the Act.

Sections 15, 17 and 18 of UAPA:
1. S. 15 engrafts the offence of 'terrorist act'.
2. S. 17 lays-down the punishment for raising funds for committing a terrorist act.
3. S. 18 engrafts the offence of 'punishment for conspiracy etc. to commit a terrorist act or any act preparatory to commit a terrorist act'.

Key observations made by the court:
1. "Terrorist Act" Should not be used lightly so as to trivialise them.
2. Terrorist activity is that which travels beyond the capacity of law enforcement agencies to deal with under ordinary penal law (Supreme Court’s decision in the case of Hitendra Vishnu Thakur).

Insta Curious: Did you know that under Section 3(1) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), “if the Central government is of opinion that any association is, or has become, an unlawful association, it may, by notification in the Official Gazette, declare such association to be unlawful?

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. Definition of unlawful activity.
2. Powers of Centre under the act.
3. Is judicial review applicable in such cases?
5. Can foreign nationals be charged under the act?

Mains Link:
Do you agree that the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act could prove catastrophic for fundamental rights? Is sacrificing liberty for national security justified? Discuss and provide for your opinion.
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. **Cybercrime went up by 500% during pandemic:**

   **Context:**
   The 14th edition of c0c0n, the annual cyber security and hacking conference is being organised by the Kerala Police.
   - At the event, **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Bipin Rawat** has stressed the need for a national framework to thwart cyber attacks that have been on the rise in the country.

   **Need for cybersecurity:**
   With data gradually transcending into the open domain with numerous firms permitting employees to work from their homes amid the pandemic, sensitive information has become susceptible to security vulnerabilities. The rise of digital payments has also increased complex cyber crimes.
   - Also, Cyber crimes have gone up by almost 500% in India during the global pandemic.
   - **The Information Technology Act, 2000**, that dealt with cybersecurity and cyber crimes is not equipped to consider new-age changes in the mode of functioning of businesses and modus operandi of crimes in cyberspace.

   **Need of the hour:**
   - While a **National Cybersecurity Strategy** is in the offing, the country is also in dire need of a **data protection law**, with cybercriminals increasingly weaponising data as a tool against national security in the post-pandemic era.
   - We need to consider the emerging threats from new technologies such as drones, ransomware, Internet of Things (IoT) devices and also the role of nation states in such cyber attacks.

   **Steps taken by the Government to spread awareness about cyber crimes:**
   1. **Online cybercrime reporting portal** has been launched to enable complainants to report complaints pertaining to Child Pornography/Child Sexual Abuse Material, rape/gang rape imageries or sexually explicit content.
   2. A scheme for establishment of **Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)** has been established to handle issues related to cybercrime in the country in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.
   3. Establishment of **National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC)** for protection of critical information infrastructure in the country.
   4. All organizations providing digital services have been mandated to report cyber security incidents to **CERT-In** expeditiously.
   5. **Cyber Swachhta Kendra** (Botnet Cleaning and Malware Analysis Centre) has been launched for providing detection of malicious programmes and free tools to remove such programmes.
   6. **Formulation of Crisis Management Plan** for countering cyber attacks and cyber terrorism.

   **What needs to be done ahead?**
   - Regularly issue alerts/advisories, l.
   - Capacity building/training of law enforcement personnel/ prosecutors/ judicial officers.
   - Improving cyber forensics facilities etc.
   - Speed up investigation.

   Finally, ‘Police’ and ‘Public Order’ are State subjects as per the Constitution of India. States/UTs are primarily responsible for prevention, detection, investigation and prosecution of crimes through their law enforcement machinery.

   **InstaLinks:**
   **Prelims Link:**
   1. About the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C).
   2. National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC).
   3. CERT- In.
2. Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019:

Context:
A Parliamentary panel deliberating on the Personal Data Protection Bill has made the following recommendations:

- Limit the exemptions available to the government under the current version by placing reasonable restrictions on how the exemption can be availed.
- The government be exempted only under a “just, fair, reasonable and proportionate procedure”.
- The government keep non-personal data “including anonymous data” outside the purview of the personal data protection bill.

Background:
The draft Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) in 2019 which was tasked to come up with a report on its recommendations on the various provisions in the bill.

What’s the issue?
Currently, the contentious clause 35 of the draft data protection bill allows the government and its agencies to gain blanket exemptions from complying with any and all provisions of the bill, with no checks and balances in place.

- Agencies like the Aadhaar authority UIDAI and the Income Tax Department have already sought to be exempted from the bill.

The Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill 2019:
The genesis of this Bill lies in the report prepared by a Committee of Experts headed by Justice B.N. Srikrishna. The committee was constituted by the government in the course of hearings before the Supreme Court in the right to privacy case (Justice K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India).

How does the bill seek to regulate data?
The bill constitutes 3 personal information types:

1. Critical
2. Sensitive
3. General

Other Key provisions:
Data principal: As per the bill, it is the individual whose data is being stored and processed.
Social media companies, which are deemed significant data fiduciaries based on factors such as volume and sensitivity of data as well as their turnover, should develop their own user verification mechanism.
An independent regulator Data Protection Agency (DPA) will oversee assessments and audits and definition making.
Each company will have a Data Protection Officer (DPO) who will liaison with the DPA for auditing, grievance redressal, recording maintenance and more.
The bill also grants individuals the right to data portability, and the ability to access and transfer one’s own data.
The right to be forgotten: This right allows an individual to remove consent for data collection and disclosure.

Exemptions:
The Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill 2019 has a contentious section 35, which invokes “sovereignty and integrity of India,” “public order”, “friendly relations with foreign states” and “security of the state” to give powers to the Central government to suspend all or any of the provisions of this Act for government agencies.

Why there are Concerns over the bill?

www.insightsonindia.com
The bill is like a two-sided sword. While it protects the personal data of Indians by empowering them with data principal rights, on the other hand, it gives the central government with exemptions which are against the principles of processing personal data.

- The government can process even sensitive personal data when needed, without explicit permission from the data principals.

3. Plea on Hate Speech in Supreme Court:

**Context:**
Two petitions have been filed in the Supreme Court on hate speeches in the recent past.
1. One petition asked the court to issue directions for action in such cases.
2. The second plea sought special provisions, insisting that the IPC wasn’t enough to deal with hate speech and rumour mongering.

Both petitions relied on a 2020 Supreme Court decision in Amish Devgun case where hate speech was linked to the violation of unity and fraternity and breach of human dignity, which constitutes an essential facet of the right to life and liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.

**What’s the issue?**
The petitioners were concerned over concerted events in the recent past that targeted political, social and economic exclusion of Muslims through a series of rallies and hate speeches.

- The petitioners sought implementation of guidelines on hate speech passed by Supreme Court in 2014 and on mob violence and lynching events in a subsequent decision in 2018.

**What is Hate Speech?**
Hate speech is an incitement to hatred against a particular group of persons marginalized by their religious belief, sexual orientation, gender, and so on.

- The Law Commission, in its 267th report on hate speech, said such utterances have the potential to provoke individuals and society to commit acts of terrorism, genocide, and ethnic cleansing.

**Why Hate Speech must be curbed?**
1. **Internal Security:** The Muzaffarnagar riots of 2013 was triggered by a fake video that incited communal passions.
2. Igniting extremist sentiments.
3. Mob lynching.
4. **Misinformation and disinformation:** Delhi Riots.

**Measures:**
1. The world’s biggest social media companies, including Facebook, Google, Twitter and ByteDance, are exploring an industry-wide alliance to curb fake news on their platforms in India.
2. The Election Commission of India must tie up with tech companies to identify the creator of such news.
3. Educating the end-users.
4. The government should bring out a policy framework on the possible harm due to the internet messaging platforms to engage at a deeper level.
5. Imposing hefty fines, like in Germany the Social media companies face fines of up to €50m if they persistently fail to remove illegal content from their sites.

**Need of the hour:**
- Hate speech is a discursive process of pushing marginalised groups outside of social, economic and political spheres of society by disseminating hate propaganda and encouraging discrimination. At its most harmful, it is widely recognized as a precursor to ethnic cleansing.
- Public authorities must be held accountable for dereliction of the duty of care and also for non-compliance with this court’s orders by not taking action to prevent vigilante groups from inciting communal disharmony and spreading hate against citizens of the country and taking the laws into their own hands.
In a recent move, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) Working Group (WG) on digital lending, including lending through online platforms and mobile apps, has submitted its recommendations. The key recommendations include:

1. A separate legislation should be enacted to oversee such lending.
2. Setup a nodal agency to vet the Digital Lending Apps.
3. A Self-Regulatory Organisation should be set up for participants in the digital lending ecosystem.
4. Develop certain baseline technology standards and compliance with those standards as a pre-condition for offering digital lending solutions.
5. Disbursement of loans should be made directly into the bank accounts of borrowers and servicing of loans should be done only through the bank accounts of the digital lenders.
6. All data collection must require the prior consent of borrowers and come ‘with verifiable audit trails’ and the data itself ought to be stored locally.

The benefits of digital lending include:

- Digital lending has the potential to make access to financial products and services more fair, efficient and inclusive.
- From a peripheral supporting role a few years ago, FinTech-led innovation is now at the core of the design, pricing and delivery of financial products and services.

The need of the hour is a balanced approach that supports innovation while ensuring data security, privacy, confidentiality and consumer protection.

What are the issues with 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.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G73970QQ8.1&imageview=0.
1. The 2006 Supreme Court ruling on police reforms:

Context:
National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) core advisory group on criminal justice system reforms has made the following recommendations to the Ministry of Home Affairs:

1. The Union Home Ministry and the State Governments should set up police complaints authorities as per the judgment in the Prakash Singh vs Union of India, 2006, case.
2. The status of compliance should be displayed on the websites of the Ministry and the State Home Departments.
3. The MHA and the Law Ministry should consider implementing the recommendations of the 113th report of the Law Commission to add Section 114 B to the Indian Evidence Act. This would ensure that if a person sustains injuries in custody, it is presumed that the injuries were inflicted by the police.
4. Make the legal framework technology-friendly to speed up the criminal justice system.
5. The Supreme Court’s December 2020 order to install CCTV cameras with night vision in all police stations should be “implemented immediately” to ensure accountability.
6. Involve trained social workers and law students with police stations as part of community policing and incorporate community policing in police manuals, laws and advisories.

What is the SC’s Prakash Singh judgment on police reforms?
Prakash Singh, who served as DGP of UP Police and Assam Police besides other postings, filed a PIL in the Supreme Court post retirement, in 1996, seeking police reforms.
- In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court in September 2006 had directed all states and Union Territories to bring in police reforms.

What measures were suggested by the Supreme Court?
1. Fixing the tenure and selection of the DGP to avoid situations where officers about to retire in a few months are given the post.
2. In order to ensure no political interference, a minimum tenure was sought for the Inspector General of Police so that they are not transferred mid-term by politicians.
3. Postings of officers should be done by Police Establishment Boards (PEB) comprising police officers and senior bureaucrats to insulate powers of postings and transfers from political leaders.
4. Set up State Police Complaints Authority (SPCA) to give a platform where common people aggrieved by police action could approach.
5. Separate investigation and law and order functions to better improve policing.
6. Set up of State Security Commissions (SSC) that would have members from civil society.
7. Form a National Security Commission.

How did states respond to these directives?
Following the 2006 judgment, not even one state was fully compliant with the apex court directives.
- 18 states passed or amended their Police Acts in this time, but not one fully matches legislative models.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:
1. When was the National Police Commission established?
2. Ribeiro committee is associated with?
3. Key recommendations made by Malimath Committee.

5. Prakash Singh case is more popularly associated with?

Mains: Write a note on police reforms.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GT295AH08_1&imageview=0.

2. Drug trafficking in Afghanistan:

Context:
www.insightsonindia.com
Drugs have been a major source of revenue for the Taliban. With the collapse of Afghanistan’s economy, the Taliban will rely heavily on drug money to maintain control over their cadres.

According to the latest World Drug Report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime:

1. **Afghanistan** reported a 37% increase in the extent of land used for illicit cultivation of opium poppy during 2020 compared with the previous year.
2. The country accounted for 85% of the global opium production last year.
3. Despite the improved capabilities of the Afghan specialised units over the years, drug seizures and arrests had minimal impact on the opium-poppy cultivation.
4. Afghanistan is also turning out to be a major source for methamphetamine.

**World Drug Report 2021:**

1. Around 275 million people used drugs globally in the last year. Over 36 million people suffered from drug use disorders.
2. Rise in the use of cannabis during the pandemic has been reported by most countries.
3. Non-medical use of pharmaceutical drugs has also been observed in the same period.
4. The latest global estimates say, about **5.5 per cent of the population between 15 and 64 years have used drugs at least once in the past year.**
5. Over 11 million people globally are estimated to inject drugs - half of them have Hepatitis C.
6. **Opioids** continue to account for the largest burden of disease-linked to drug abuse.

**Indian Government has taken several policy and other initiatives to deal with drug trafficking problem:**

1. The 'Nasha Mukt Bharat Abhiyan', or a 'Drugs-Free India Campaign' was flagged off on 15th August 2020 across 272 districts of the country found to be most vulnerable based on the data available from various sources.
3. The government has constituted Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD) in November, 2016.
4. The government has constituted a fund called “National Fund for Control of Drug Abuse” to meet the expenditure incurred in connection with combating illicit traffic in Narcotic Drugs; rehabilitating addicts, and educating public against drug abuse, etc.

**Insta Curious:** Did you know that the day June 26 was chosen by the UN General Assembly, on December 7, 1987, as **International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.**

**InstaLinks:**

**Prelims Link:**

1. About UNODC.
2. Overview of scheme of “Financial Assistance to States for Narcotics Control”.
3. Composition of Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD).
5. About Narcotics Control Bureau.

6. International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking and theme this year.

**Mains Link:**

India is vulnerable to narcotic drug trafficking. Critically examine its causes. Also comment on the role of the Government in combating drug problems.

**Topics: Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.**

1. **Integrated theatre commands:**

**Context:**

In a fresh push towards the creation of theatre commands to fight the next wars in an integrated manner, the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) under the Defence Ministry has asked the three services to conduct studies on the structures of the new formations and submit their reports by April next year.

**Background:**

- India currently has 19 military commands with 17 of them service-oriented. While both the Army and the Air Force have seven commands each, the Navy has three.
India also has a Tri-Service Command — Andaman and Nicobar Command — besides the Strategic Forces Command (SFC), which looks after the country’s nuclear stockpile.

What are integrated theatre commands?
- An integrated theatre command envisages a unified command of the three Services, under a single commander, for geographical areas that are of strategic and security concern.
- The commander of such a force will be able to bear all resources at his disposal — from the Army, the Indian Air Force, and the Navy — with seamless efficacy.
- The integrated theatre commander will not be answerable to individual Services.

Why does India seek theatre commands?
- This will help in better planning and military response and also bring down cost.
- While the cost may go up in the immediate future since all theatres would have to be armed with sufficient systems, it will prove to be cost-effective in the long term as all acquisitions will be a unified one.
- It will provide a unified approach to fighting the future wars.

Proposals in this regard:
The need for a unified approach to war fighting was brought out in the deliberations after the 1999 Kargil battle.
- The Kargil Review Committee and the then Group of Ministers besides the Naresh Chandra Committee had called for structural changes in higher defence management.
- It was the Shekatkar committee, headed by Lt Gen. (retd) D.B. Shekatkar, which had recommended the creation of the post of CDS and theatre commands.

Insta Curious: Do you know about the Nuclear Command Authority? Who heads the organisation and what are its functions? Reference:

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GJP8R2J8O.1&imageview=0.
GENERAL STUDIES – 4

1. At COP26, T.N. teenager tells leaders that youth are angry:

Context:
Vinisha Umashankar from Tamil Nadu recently spoke on clean energy at a meeting that discussed clean technology and innovation as part of the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of Parties (COP26) in Glasgow.
- Among her audience were world leaders, including British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, U.S. President Joe Biden, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

What did she say?

Young people have every reason to be angry and frustrated at leaders who have made empty promises and failed to deliver. None of what we discuss today is practical for me. We need actions rather than promises to live in a habitable world.
- She urged everyone - world leaders, business leaders, international organization as well as the civil society - to immediately "stop talking and start acting" when it comes to tackling climate change.
- We will act even if you delay and we'll build the future even if you're still stuck in the past," the teenager said while requesting all present to accept her invite and assured that no-one will regret doing so.
- Winding up her speech, she said, "When it comes to climate change there's no stop button. We can't hit pause or even rewind. We can only move together towards the future so united we rise and together we will definitely succeed".

Who is she?
- She is one of the finalists for the Earthshot Prize.
- She is the founder of the solar-powered ironing cart, which would replace the conventional charcoal ironing box.
- Her innovation brought her laurels from around the world, including the prestigious Children’s Climate Prize in November 2021.

Relevance:
This example is related to the topic 'Aptitude and foundational values for Civil Service'. It talks about values such as empathy and compassion towards the weaker-sections.

Link: https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G5O95EU82.1&imageview=0
FACTS FOR PRELIMS

1. Punjab to conserve Indus river dolphins:
Punjab’s wildlife preservation wing has proposed to protect Indus dolphins and their natural habitat.

About Indus Dolphin:
- The Indus river dolphin is classified as endangered by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- The Indus river dolphin was declared the State aquatic animal of Punjab in 2019.
- They are found in Pakistan. In 2007, a remnant but viable population of Indus dolphins was discovered in Punjab’s Harike wildlife sanctuary and in the lower Beas river.
- They are functionally blind and rely on echolocation to navigate, communicate and hunt prey including prawns, catfish and carp.

2. Strait of Hormuz:
- It is the waterway separates Iran and Oman, linking the Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.
- On the north coast lies Iran, and on the south are the UAE and Musandam, an enclave of Oman.
- The Strait is 21 miles (33 km) wide at its narrowest point, but the shipping lane is just two miles (three km) wide in either direction.

3. Rescue guide for Ganges River Dolphin:
The Jal Shakti Ministry has released a guide for the safe rescue and release of stranded Ganges river dolphins.
- The document has been prepared by the Turtle Survival Alliance and the Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department (EFCCD) of the Uttar Pradesh Government.
- The manual is endorsed by the IUCN Cetacean Specialist Group.

About the Ganges Dolphin:
- The Ganges river dolphin is the national aquatic animal of India.
- The species, whose global population is estimated at 4,000, is mostly found in the Indian subcontinent.
- The Ganges river dolphin can only live in freshwater and is essentially blind.

Threats:
The dolphins often accidentally enter canals in northern India and are unable to swim up against the gradient. They are also vulnerable to harm by people.

4. BASIC Countries:
- The BASIC group was formed as the result of an agreement signed by the four countries on November 28, 2009.
- They are a bloc of four large newly industrialized countries – Brazil, South Africa, India and China.
- The four committed to act jointly at the Copenhagen climate summit, including a possible united walk-out if their common minimum position was not met by the developed nations.
- This emerging geopolitical alliance, initiated and led by China, then brokered the final Copenhagen Accord with the United States.
• Subsequently, the grouping is working to define a common position on emission reductions and climate aid money, and to try to convince other countries to sign up to the Copenhagen Accord.

5. Anti-terror agency set up in J&K:
• The J&K Government has set up a new State Investigation Agency (SIA) for “speedy and effective investigation and prosecution of militancy-related cases in the Union Territory”.
• The SIA will be a nodal agency for coordinating with the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and other Central agencies.
• The head of the CID wing shall be the ex-officio Director of the SIA.

6. Defence Acquisition Council (DAC):
To counter corruption and speed up decision-making in military procurement, the government of India in 2001 decided to set up an integrated DAC.
• It is headed by the Defence Minister.
• Objective: The objective of the DAC is to ensure expeditious procurement of the approved requirements of the Armed Forces, in terms of capabilities sought, and time frame prescribed, by optimally utilizing the allocated budgetary resources.
• Functions: The DAC is responsible to give policy guidelines to acquisitions, based on long-term procurement plans. It also clears all acquisitions, which includes both imported and those produced indigenously or under a foreign license.

7. Kameng river:
Context: Studies have indicated that landslides caused by an earthquake of 3.4 magnitude close to the border with China led to mass fish death in the Kameng river in Arunachal Pradesh.
• The landslips dumped several tonnes of mud and rock into the river, substantially reducing the flow of water.
• The river turned blackish due to very high turbidity resulting in low dissolved oxygen that killed the fish.

The Kameng River:
• It is the right-bank tributary of the Brahmaputra river.
• It rises in the Tawang district in the eastern Himalayas. It forms the border between the East Kameng district and the West Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh.
• In Assam, it flows through the Sonitpur district before joining the Brahmaputra at Tezpur.
• The Kameng River consists of two sections- the west consisting of the Akka hills and resided by the Akka tribes and the east consisting of the Dafla hills resided by the Daphla tribe.
• The Kaziranga National Park and the Pakhui Wildlife Sanctuary are located near the Kameng river.

8. Who are the Vanniyars?
Vanniyars are one of the largest and most consolidated backward communities in Tamil Nadu. They had raised massive protests in the mid-1980s demanding 20% reservation in the state, and 2% in central services.
Why in News?
The Madras High Court has quashed the 10.5% special internal reservation provided by the Tamil Nadu government to Vanniyars, a most backward caste (MBC).
• The court said the quota was ultra vires to the Constitution.

9. Abu Dhabi gives nod to non-Muslim civil marriage:
• Non-Muslims will be allowed to marry, divorce and get joint child custody under civil law in Abu Dhabi according to a new decree issued by its ruler.
- It aims to "enhance the position and global competitiveness of the emirate as one of the most attractive destinations for talent and skills.
- It is the latest step in the United Arab Emirates -- where personal status laws on marriage and divorce had been based on Islamic sharia principles, as in other Gulf states -- to maintain its competitive edge as a regional commercial hub.

10. Goa Maritime Conclave:
- The third edition of Goa Maritime Conclave (GMC) – 2021 was hosted by the Indian Navy under the aegis of Naval War College, Goa.
- The theme for this year’s edition of GMC is “Maritime Security and Emerging Non-Traditional Threats: A Case for Proactive Role for IOR Navies”.
- Chiefs of Navies/ Heads of Maritime Forces from 12 Indian Ocean Region countries attended the conclave.
- The conclave is a multinational platform that uses collective wisdom of international maritime security providers. The participants of the conclave will benefit from the interactions with subject matter experts and eminent speakers.

11. Yuktdhara:
- It is a Geospatial Planning Portal for facilitating Gram Panchayat level planning of MGNREGA. It is a new portal under ‘Bhuvan’.
- Launched by the Ministry of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj.
- The platform will serve as a repository of assets (Geotags) created under various national rural development programmes i.e. MGNREGA, Integrated Watershed Management Programme, Per Drop More Crop and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana, etc.

12. Islamic State Khorasan Province:
- IS-K - Islamic State Khorasan Province - is the regional affiliate of the Islamic State group.
- It is the most extreme and violent of all the jihadist militant groups in Afghanistan.
- IS-K was set up in January 2015 at the height of IS’s power in Iraq and Syria, before its self-declared caliphate was defeated and dismantled by a US-led coalition.
- "Khorasan" refers to a historical region covering parts of modern-day Afghanistan and Pakistan. The group initially included Pakistan until a separate Pakistan section was declared in May 2019.

13. Diego Garcia:
- It is an island of the British Indian Ocean Territory, an overseas territory of the United Kingdom.
- It is the largest of 60 small islands comprising the Chagos Archipelago.
- The Portuguese were the first Europeans to find it and it was then settled by the French in the 1790s and transferred to British rule after the Napoleonic Wars.
- In 1965, Britain separated the Chagos Islands from Mauritius and set up a joint military base with the United States on Diego Garcia.
- Britain insists the islands belong to London and has renewed a lease agreement with the United States to use Diego Garcia until 2036.

14. India confers honorary rank of General on Nepal Army Chief:
- Nepal Army Chief General Prabhu Ram Sharma has been conferred the honorary rank of General of the Indian Army by President Ram Nath Kovind.
- It is a customary practice by the two countries to confer the honorary rank of General on each other’s Army Chiefs.
15. **Global Drug Policy Index:**
- The inaugural Global Drug Policy Index was released recently by the Harm Reduction Consortium.
- It is composed of 75 indicators running across five broad dimensions of drug policy: criminal justice, extreme responses, health and harm reduction, access to internationally controlled medicines, and development.
- It ranks Norway, New Zealand, Portugal, the UK and Australia as the five leading countries on humane and health-driven drug policies.
- The five lowest-ranking countries are Brazil, Uganda, Indonesia, Kenya, and Mexico.
- India’s rank is 18 out of 30 countries.

16. **Pakke tiger reserve:**
- Pakke Tiger Reserve is also known as Pakhui Tiger Reserve.
- This Tiger Reserve has won India Biodiversity Award 2016 in the category of ‘Conservation of threatened species’ for its Hornbill Nest Adoption Programme.
- It is bounded by Bhareli or Kameng River in the west and north, and by Pakke River in the east.
- Neighbours: Papum Reserve Forest in Arunachal Pradesh, Assam’s Nameri National Park, Doimara Reserve Forest and Eaglenest Wildlife Sanctuary.
- The main perennial streams in the area are the Nameri, Khari and Upper Dikorai. West of Kameng River is Sessa Orchid Sanctuary.
- It falls within the Eastern Himalaya Biodiversity Hotspot.

17. **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI):**
1. Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) is an autonomous statutory body established under the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006 (FSS Act).
2. Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India is the administrative Ministry of FSSAI.
3. To pursue any food related business, the owner needs to get a certificate and license with the permission of FSSAI.

18. **Delhi Declaration on Afghanistan:**
- A regional security summit was recently hosted by India. The summit was attended by eight nations including Iran and Russia.
- This is the third meeting of the Regional Security Dialogue (the earlier two meetings were held in in Iran, in 2018 and 2019).
- Conference was represented by the national security advisors of each country.
- During the conference, it was announced that Afghanistan & its territories cannot be used to shelter or train terrorists, or to finance any act of terrorism.
- Countries issued a joint statement, dubbed as “Delhi Declaration on Afghanistan”.
- The Declaration emphasised on: Secure and Stable Afghanistan, condemning terrorism, Ensuring Fundamental Rights, collective Co-operation and the role of UN.

19. **Next COP venues:**
   The 2021 UN Climate Change Conference, COP26, concluded recently at Glasgow.
• At the end of the conference, the council decided that the 2022 edition of the Conference of Parties, or the 27th COP, will take place at Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, and the 28th edition in 2023 will be held in the UAE.

20. Kashi corridor project:
• The project connects the Kashi temple with the ghats of the Ganga, with a paved walkway around 320 metres long and 20 metres wide.
• It will also have facilities for a museum, library, a facilitation centre for pilgrims and a Mumuksha Bhawan (salvation house).

21. Kamo’oalewa:
In 2006, the PanSTARRS telescope in Hawaii spotted a quasi-satellite — a near-Earth object that orbits the Sun and yet remains close to the Earth. Scientists named it Kamo’oalewa, a word that is part of a Hawaiian chant, and alludes to an offspring that travels on its own.

22. Devasahayam:
• Devasahayam Pillai is a Hindu man from Kanyakumari district in Tamil Nadu, who converted to Christianity in the 18th century.
• He is set to become the first Indian layman to be declared a saint by the Vatican on May 15, 2022.
• He took the name ‘Lazarus’ in 1745.
• He was first approved for sainthood in February 2020 for “enduring increasing hardships” after he decided to embrace Christianity.
• Devasahayam is said to have faced harsh persecution and imprisonment after he decided to convert to Christianity, ultimately resulting in his killing in 1752.

23. Hazaras of Afghanistan:
• Hazara is an ethnic group from Afghanistan.
• They are believed to be descendants of the founder of the Mongol empire, Genghis Khan, and his army that overran the entire region during the 13th century.
• Their distinct Asiatic features and use of a Persian dialect called Hazaragi also sets them apart from the rest of the country.

24. Biju Swasthya Kalyan Yojana:
• Launched by Odisha government.
• It promises cashless healthcare coverage of up to Rs 5 lakh for nearly 96 lakh families in the state. The expense limit for women beneficiaries under BSKY is Rs 10 lakh.
• The smart card holders will get cashless health coverage in more than 200 empaneled hospitals in the state.

25. Addu Atoll:
• Located in Maldives.
• Apart from its strategic location in the Indian Ocean, Addu is the second largest city in the archipelago, home to over 30,000 people.

Why in News?
President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih has said that the Maldives has made no decision on opening an Indian consulate in its southern Addu Atoll.
26. **SEBI unveils investor charter:**
Markets regulator SEBI has issued an investor charter aimed at protecting the interest of investors in the securities market.
- The vision of the investor charter is "to protect the interests of investors by enabling them to understand the risks involved and invest in a fair, transparent, secure market, and to get services in a timely and efficient manner."
- The rights include getting fair and equitable treatment, and expecting redressal of investor grievances filed in the SCORES portal in a time-bound manner.
- This also includes getting quality services from SEBI-recognised market infrastructure institutions and SEBI-registered intermediaries, regulated entities and asset management companies.

27. **Zircon hypersonic cruise missile:**
- Russia has carried out another successful test of its Zircon hypersonic cruise missile, one the latest additions to the country’s arsenal of weapons called “invincible” by President Vladimir Putin.
- Hypersonics can travel more than five times the speed of sound and manoeuvre in mid-flight, making them much harder to track and intercept than traditional projectiles.

28. **OP SANKALP:**
INS Trikand is currently deployed in the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman as part of Operation Sankalp.
- Operation Sankalp was started in June 2019 after there were explosions on board two oil tanker ships in the Gulf of Oman amid increased tensions between Iran and the U.S.
- It is the Indian Navy’s effort to maintain a frontline ship in the region to ensure safe and secure movement of trade, instill confidence in the maritime community and contribute to regional maritime security.

29. **Core Sector Industries:**
The eight core sector industries include coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, cement and electricity
- The eight core industries comprise nearly 40% of the weight of items included in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
- The eight Core Industries in decreasing order of their weightage: Refinery Products> Electricity> Steel> Coal> Crude Oil> Natural Gas> Cement> Fertilizers.

30. **Credit default swap:**
- It is an example of a credit derivative transaction where credit protection is bought and sold.
- In a Credit Default Swap (CDS), one party agrees to pay another party periodic fixed payments in exchange for receiving 'credit event protection', in the form of a payment, in the event that a third party or its obligations are subject to one or more pre-agreed adverse credit events over a pre-agreed time period.
- Typical credit events include bankruptcy, failure to pay, obligation acceleration, restructuring, and repudiation/moratorium.

31. **National Productivity Council (NPC):**
- Established by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India in 1958, it is an autonomous, multipartite, non-profit organization.
- NPC is a constituent of the Tokyo-based Asian Productivity Organisation (APO), an Intergovernmental Body, of which the Government of India is a founder member.

32. **Suez Canal:**
- The Suez Canal is an artificial sea-level waterway running north to south across the Isthmus of Suez in Egypt, to connect the Mediterranean Sea and the Red Sea.
- The canal separates the African continent from Asia.
- It provides the shortest maritime route between Europe and the lands lying around the Indian and western Pacific oceans.
- It is one of the world’s most heavily used shipping lanes, carrying over 12% of world trade by volume.

33. **Pygmy hogs:**
1. They are the world’s rarest and smallest wild pigs.
2. The pygmy hog is native to dense alluvial grasslands in the southern foothills of the Himalayas.
3. **Endemic to India,** they are restricted to very few locations around Manas National Park in north-western Assam.
4. With just around 250 animals in the wild, the pygmy hog is one of the world’s most threatened mammals.
5. Currently listed as ‘Critically Endangered’ on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.
6. The pygmy hog is designated as a Schedule I species in India under the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

34. **What is El Salvador’s Bitcoin city?**
- El Salvador, the only country to recognise Bitcoin as a legal tender, is planning to build an entire city based on the largest cryptocurrency Bitcoin.
- El Salvador’s “Bitcoin City” would be funded with the issuance of a $1 billion Bitcoin Bond.
- The city will be located along the Gulf of Fonseca near Conchagua volcano.
- El Salvador is already running a pilot Bitcoin mining venture at another geothermal power plant beside the Tecapa volcano.

35. **Taiwan Strait:**
- The Taiwan Strait is a 110-mile-wide channel that separates mainland China from the island of Taiwan.
- It is also known as the Formosa Strait or the Tai-hai (the Tai Sea).
- The Taiwan Strait makes up part of the South China Sea, and its northern portion is linked to the East China Sea.
- The strait borders the south eastern part of China and runs along the eastern part of China’s Fujian Province.

36. **‘Bharat Gaurav’ scheme:**
- To tap the huge potential of tourism, the Railways has announced the ‘Bharat Gaurav’ scheme, under which theme-based tourist circuit trains, on the lines of the Ramayana Express, can be run either by private or State-owned operators.
- Service providers, who can be an individual, company, society, trust, joint venture or consortium, will be free to decide themes and circuits such as Guru Kripa trains for covering important places of Sikh culture or the Ramayana Express for places connected with Lord Ram.
37. Tawang:
- Tawang was historically part of Tibet.
- The 1914 Simla Accord defined the McMahon Line as the new boundary between British India and Tibet. By this treaty Tibet relinquished some of its territories, including Tawang, to the British. But it was not recognised by China.
- In 1950, Tibet lost its de facto independence and was incorporated into the newly established People’s Republic of China.
- Later, in 1959, when the current Dalai Lama fled Tibet, he came into India through Tawang.
- During the Sino-Indian war of 1962, Tawang fell briefly under Chinese control, but China voluntarily withdrew its troops at the end of the war.
- Tawang again came under Indian administration, but China has not relinquished its claims on most of Arunachal Pradesh including Tawang.

38. Dosti:
The 15th edition of the biennial trilateral coast guard exercise ‘Dosti’ involving India, the Maldives and Sri Lanka is underway in the Maldives. 2021 marks 30 years since these exercises were first launched.

39. English Channel:
- The English Channel is a part of the Atlantic Ocean.
- It separates the island of Britain (part of the UK) from northern France and joins the North Sea to the Atlantic Ocean.
- It’s approximately 350 miles long, and at its narrowest in the Strait of Dover.

40. Subansiri Hydroelectric Project (LSHP):
- Subansiri Lower Hydroelectric Project (SLHEP), is an under-construction gravity dam on the Subansiri river along the border of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.
- Subansiri River (gold river), originates in the Tibet Plateau and enters India through Miri hills in Arunachal Pradesh.
- It is the largest tributary of Brahmaputra River.
- The project is being developed by the state-run National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC).
- It will be the single largest hydroelectric plant in India when completed. The project is expected to be completed in 2023.

41. South Asian University:
- Established in 2010, it is an international university, located in India.
- It is sponsored by the eight Member States of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).
- Degrees and Certificates awarded by the SAU are at par with the respective Degrees and Certificates awarded by the National Universities/ Institutions.

42. Sir Chhotu Ram:
- Born in 1881, he was a prominent politician in British India's Punjab Province.
- He championed the interest of oppressed communities of the Indian subcontinent. For this feat, he was knighted in 1937.
- He was a co-founder of the National Unionist Party.
The enactment of two agrarian laws was primarily due to his contribution— the Punjab Relief Indebtedness Act of 1934 and the Punjab Debtor’s Protection Act of 1936, which emancipated the peasants from the clutches of the moneylenders and restored the right of land to the tiller.
43. National Crisis Management Committee:
For effective implementation of relief measures in the wake of natural calamities, the Government of India has set up a National Crisis Management Committee.

- The Cabinet Secretary is its **Chairman**.
- **Other members:** Secretaries of all the concerned Ministries/Departments as well as organizations are the members of the Committee.
- The NCMC **gives direction to the Crisis Management Group as deemed necessary.**

44. Gulf Of Aden:
- *Gulf of Aden, also known as the Gulf of Berbera,* is a deepwater gulf between Yemen to the north, the Arabian Sea to the east, Djibouti to the west, and the Guardafui Channel, Socotra (Yemen), and Somalia to the south.
- In the northwest, it connects with the Red Sea through the Bab-el-Mandeb strait, and it connects with the Arabian Sea to the east. To the west, it narrows into the Gulf of Tadjoura in Djibouti.

45. Poshan Gyan:
- It is a national digital repository on health and nutrition.
- Launched by NITI Aayog, in partnership with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and Centre for Social and Behaviour Change, Ashoka University.
- The Poshan Gyan repository is conceptualized as a resource, enabling search of communication materials on 14 thematic areas of health and nutrition across diverse languages, media types, target audiences and sources.

46. Hazaras of Afghanistan:
- Hazara is an ethnic group from Afghanistan.
- They are believed to be descendants of the founder of the Mongol empire, Genghis Khan, and his army that overran the entire region during the 13th century.
- Their distinct Asiatic features and use of a Persian dialect called Hazaragi also sets them apart from the rest of the country.

47. Tiwa tribe and Wanchuwa festival:
- This festival is celebrated by Tiwa tribesmen to mark their good harvest.
- It comes with songs, dances, a bunch of rituals and people clad in their native attires.
- The people of Tiwa tribe associate the bountiful harvest with the higher power from nature. This takes the form of pigs' skulls and bones which act as deities and are preserved through many generations.
- Tiwa also known as Lalung is indigenous community inhabiting the states of Assam and Meghalaya and are also found in some parts of Arunachal Pradesh and Manipur.