



INSIGHTSIAS

SIMPLIFYING IAS EXAM PREPARATION

INSTA CURRENT AFFAIRS

JUNE 2021

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GENERAL STUDIES – 1

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

1. The history of Tulu and the demand for official language status:

Context:

Clamour grows for **Tulu** to be included in the [eighth schedule of the Constitution](#) and given **official language** status in Karnataka and Kerala.

About Tulu language:

- Tulu is a **Dravidian language** spoken mainly in **two coastal districts Dakshina Kannada and Udupi of Karnataka and Kasaragod district of Kerala.**
- As per the 2011 Census report, there are 18,46,427 Tulu-speaking people in India.
- **Robert Caldwell** (1814-1891), in his book, **A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South-Indian Family of Languages**, called Tulu “one of the most highly developed languages of the Dravidian family”.
- Tulu has a rich oral literature tradition with folk-song forms like paddana, and traditional folk theatre yakshagana.

Eighth schedule to the Constitution:

Part XVII of the Indian constitution deals with the **official languages** in Articles 343 to 351.

The Constitutional provisions related to the Eighth Schedule are:

1. **Article 344:** Article 344(1) provides for the constitution of a **Commission** by the President on expiration of five years from the commencement of the Constitution.
2. **Article 351:** It provides for the spread of the Hindi language to develop it so that it may serve as a medium of expression for all the elements of the composite culture of India.

Assamese, Bengali, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Oriya, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Bodo, Santhali, Maithili and Dogri are the **22 languages** presently in the eighth schedule to the Constitution.

Insta Curious:

Did you know that Kasaragod district is called '**Sapta bhasha Samgama Bhumi** (the confluence of seven languages)', and Tulu is among the seven? Read more about the issue [here](#),

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Which states in India have the provision of optional use of Hindi in Court proceedings?
2. What is the Eighth schedule of the Indian Constitution.
3. What is Article 348 related to?
4. Governors' powers to authorise the use of Hindi in High Court proceedings.
5. Who can add or remove languages from the 8th schedule?

6. Overview of the Official Languages Act of 1963.

Mains Link:

Discuss why the government should consider amending the Official Languages Act of 1963 to include more vernacular languages in governance, and not just confine it to Hindi and English.

Link:<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/tulu-language-protest-history-7358953/lite/>.

2. Sant Kabir Das Jayanti:

Context:

Kabirdas Jayanti, the birth anniversary of Sant Kabir Das is observed on Jyeshtha Purnima tithi. This year it was on June 24th.

About Kabir:

- Sant Kabir Das was a very renowned saint, poet and social reformer of India who lived during the 15th century. His esteemed works and poems describe the greatness and oneness of the Supreme Being.
- He was a proponent of [the Bhakti Movement](#).
- He did not believe in any religious discrimination and readily accepted all the religions.
- A religious community known as 'Kabir Panth' was founded by him and the members of this forum are referred to as 'Kabir Panthis'.
- **Swami Ramananda influence:** Kabir Das' ideologies were greatly influenced by Vaishnava saint Swami Ramananda who accepted Kabir as his disciple.

His famous literary works:

- Bijak, Sakhi Granth, Kabir Granthawali and Anurag Sagar.
- His verses are found in Sikhism's scripture **Guru Granth Sahib**.
- The major part of his work was collected by the fifth Sikh guru, Guru Arjan Dev.

The hallmark of Sant Kabirdas' work consists of his two line couplets, popularly known as '**Kabir Ke Dohe**'.



Kabir Das

Insta Curious:

Do you know the meaning of 'Mashuq' & 'Ashiq' in sufism? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About Kabir Das.
2. His literary works.
3. Bhakti movement.

4. Key reformers of Bhakti movement.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of Bhakti movement.

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

1. Ram Prasad Bismil:

Context:

Ram Prasad Bismil was born on **June 11, 1897**, in a nondescript village in Uttar Pradesh's Shahjahanpur district.

- He was among the most notable Indian revolutionaries who fought British colonialism and made it possible for the nation to breathe the air of freedom after centuries of struggle against the imperial forces.

Important organizations/works he was associated with:

1. He was associated with [the Arya Samaj](#) from an early age.
2. Bismil along with Genda Lal Dixit, a school teacher from Auraiya, organised youth from Etawah, Mainpuri, Agra and Shahjahanpur districts to strengthen their organisations, '**Matrivedi**' and '**Shivaji Samiti**'.
3. He published a pamphlet titled '**Deshwasiyon ke Naam**' and distributed it along with his poem '**Mainpuri ki Pratigya**' on January 28, 1918. To collect funds for the parties, they looted government coffers.
4. After conflicting views and growing resentment with the Congress party, he formed [the Hindustan Republic Association](#) which soon had leaders like Bhagat Singh and Chandrashekhar Azad.

Events he was associated with:

- He participated in the **Mainpuri conspiracy of 1918**.
- On August 9, 1925, Ram Prasad Bismil along with companions Ashfaqulla Khan and others executed the plan of looting the train at Kakori near Lucknow.

Ideology:

His ideals of freedom struggle stood in stark contrast to that of Mahatma Gandhi and he would reportedly say "independence would not be achieved by means of non-violence".

Raj Ghat:

He was hanged in the Gorakhpur jail on December 19, 1927 and cremated on the banks of Rapti river. The site later came to be known as **Raj Ghat**.



Insta Curious:

Who all were involved in the Kakori conspiracy and what was its objective? Read here, https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kakori_conspiracy.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. His ideology.
2. Organisations associated with.
3. Contributions to the freedom struggle.
4. Important literary works.

Mains Link:

Ram Prasad Bismil's ideals of freedom struggle stood in stark contrast to that of Mahatma Gandhi. Comment.

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

1. Flag Satyagraha:

Context:

The Ministry of Culture on **18th June** had organised a programme to observe **the Flag Satyagraha in Jabalpur, Madhya Pradesh**.

What is Flag Satyagraha?

1. The Flag Satyagraha movement by the freedom fighters shook the British government and it infused a new life into the freedom movement.
2. Also called **the Jhanda Satyagraha**, it was **held in Jabalpur and Nagpur in 1923**.
3. The news of flag hoisting in Jabalpur spread like fire in the country and after flags were hoisted at several places across the country.

Significance:

It is a campaign of peaceful civil disobedience that focused on **exercising the right and freedom to hoist the nationalist flag and challenge the legitimacy of the British Rule** in India through the defiance of laws prohibiting the hoisting of nationalist flags and restricting civil freedoms.

Outcomes:

The arrest of nationalist protestors demanding the right to hoist the flag caused an outcry across India especially as Gandhi had recently been arrested.

- Nationalist leaders such as **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Jamnalal Bajaj, Chakravarthi Rajagopalachari, Dr. Rajendra Prasad and Vinoba Bhave** organised the revolt and thousands of people from different regions traveled to Nagpur and other parts of the Central Provinces to participate in civil disobedience.
- In the end, the British negotiated an agreement with Patel and other Congress leaders permitting the protestors to conduct their march unhindered and obtaining the release of all those arrested.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about Shivapur Dhwaja Satyagraha? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. When was the flag designed by Venkayya officially accepted by the Indian National Congress?
2. Adoption of National Flag by the Constituent Assembly.

3. Flag Code of India- overview.

4. Manufacturer of the national flag in India.
5. About Flag Protests in India.

Mains Link:

Discuss the key provisions of Flag Code of India, 2002.

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:

President Joe Biden and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson 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 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:

Prelims Link:

1. Signatories of Atlantic Charter.
2. Components.
3. World War 2- causes and outcomes.

Mains Link: Discuss the significance of Atlantic Charter.

Link:<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/news/international/biden-johnson-seek-to-sign-new-atlantic-charter/article34783366.ece/amp/>.

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 has given its preliminary approval to [the draft Master Plan for Delhi 2041](#). The draft is now in the public domain for objections and suggestions from citizens, after which it will be enforced.

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

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link and Mains Link:

Components and significance of the master plan.

Link: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-delhis-master-plan-2041-its-key-areas-and-challenges-7352735/lite/>.

2. India Smart Cities Awards 2020:

Context:

The **Union ministry of housing and urban affairs** has released the list of **India smart cities awards (ISCA) 2020**.

The awards were announced to commemorate six years of the central government's three initiatives to spur urban development:

1. [Smart Cities Mission \(SCM\)](#).
2. [Atal Mission for Urban Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation \(AMRUT\)](#).
3. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U).

Performance of various States and cities:

1. Uttar Pradesh emerged on the top among all states, followed by Madhya Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
2. Indore (Madhya Pradesh) and Surat (Gujarat) won the award jointly for their overall development.
3. Ahmedabad bagged the 'Smart Cities Leadership Award' and Chandigarh, the award for union territories, while Indore won the "Innovative Idea Award".

Parameters used for ranking:

- These rankings were arrived at by the government on the basis of several parameters such as social aspects, governance, culture, urban environment, sanitation, economy, built environment, water, urban mobility.
- For the year of the pandemic, additional parameters of **sustainable business model of Integrated Command and Control Centres and innovation in Covid-19 management** were also counted for the awards.

Smart Cities mission:

- GoI launched the smart cities mission in 2015.
- The objective is to integrate city functions, utilize scarce resources more efficiently, and improve the quality of life of citizens.
- It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**.

Smart city is envisaged to have four pillars:

1. Social Infrastructure.
2. Physical Infrastructure.
3. Institutional Infrastructure (including Governance).
4. Economic Infrastructure.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about the Global Smart City Index? [Read Here](#) (Briefly)

Do you remember the City Innovation Exchange (CiX)? [Read this](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About the Smart Cities Mission.
2. India smart cities awards (ISCA)- latest edition.

3. Parameters used for ranking.

4. About the AMRUT mission.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of the Smart Cities Mission.

3. Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (URBAN):

Context:

Anniversary event- [Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban \(PMAY-U\)](#) was launched on 25th June, 2015.

About PMAY- Urban:

Launched by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation (MoHUPA) in Mission mode**.

It envisions provision of **Housing for All by 2022**, when the Nation completes 75 years of its Independence.

The Mission seeks to address the housing requirement of urban poor including slum dwellers through following programme verticals:

1. **Slum rehabilitation** of Slum Dwellers with participation of private developers using land as a resource.
2. Promotion of Affordable Housing for weaker sections through **credit linked subsidy**.
3. Affordable Housing in Partnership with Public & Private sectors.
4. Subsidy for **beneficiary-led individual house construction /enhancement**.

Credit linked subsidy component will be implemented as a Central Sector Scheme while other three components will be implemented as Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS).

Ownership of houses:

Houses are to be allotted in the name of adult female members or in joint name and all houses to have toilet facility, drinking water and power supply. Preference is given to persons with disabilities, ST/ SC/ OBCs, minorities and transgender.

Achievements:

A total of 1.12 crore houses have been sanctioned under Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana (U), of which 82.5 lakh houses have been grounded and around 48 lakh have been completed.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about Housing rights in International Law? [Read Here](#)

Can you recollect the Differences between centrally sponsored schemes and central sector schemes? [Read this](#),

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. PMAY Urban vs Rural.
2. Key features.
3. Implementation.

4. Eligibility.

Mains Link:

Write a note on PMAY- URBAN.

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. Summer solstice:

Context:

June 21- this day is referred to as **the summer solstice**, the longest day of the summer season. It occurs when the sun is directly over the Tropic of Cancer.

What causes this?

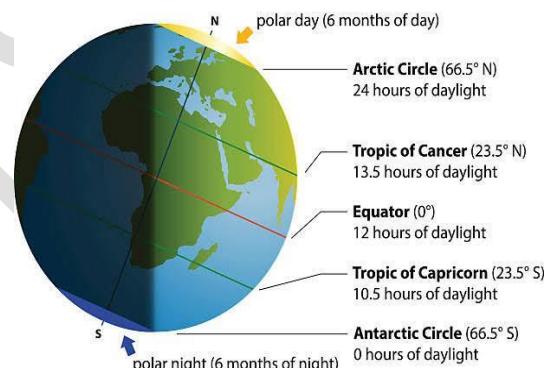
Solstice means “sun stands still” in Latin.

Solstice is an astronomical event, **caused by Earth's tilt on its axis and its motion in orbit around the sun.**

At the June solstice, Earth is positioned in its orbit so that our world's North Pole is leaning most toward the sun.

- As seen from Earth, the sun is directly overhead at noon 23 1/2 degrees north of the equator, at an imaginary line encircling the globe known as **the Tropic of Cancer** – named after the constellation Cancer the Crab. This is as far north as the sun ever gets.

summer solstice (June 21)



Implications:

1. All locations north of the equator have days longer than 12 hours at the June solstice. Meanwhile, all locations south of the equator have days shorter than 12 hours.
2. This day is characterised by a greater amount of energy received from the sun. According to NASA, the amount of incoming energy the Earth received from the sun on this day is 30 per cent higher at the North Pole than at the Equator.

What is the winter solstice?

21st December or the Winter Solstice marks the shortest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere.

- It is the shortest day and longest night of the year in the Northern Hemisphere and is also known as the ‘first day of winter’ in the Northern Hemisphere as well as ‘Hemal solstice or Hibernal solstice’.
- During this, **countries in the Northern Hemisphere are farthest from the Sun and the Sun shines overhead on the Tropic of Capricorn (23.5° south).**

Insta Curious:

Do you know about Lahaina noon? [Read Here](#)

3. Countries on Tropic of Cancer.

4. Tropic of Capricorn.

5. Perihelion vs Aphelion.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is Solstice?
2. Differences between Summer and Winter Solstices.

Link:<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/summer-solstice-explained-why-june-21-will-be-the-longest-day-of-the-year-in-northern-hemisphere-7367636/lite/>.

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. Rengma Nagas demand autonomous council:

Context:

The **Rengma Nagas** in Assam have written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah demanding an autonomous district council amid a decision by the Central and the State governments to upgrade the **Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC)** into a territorial council.

What's the issue? What are the demands?

With the Assam government on verge of inking peace Accord with KarbiAnglong based militant outfits, **NSCN-IM** stated any agreement that victimize the Rengma Nagas would not be acceptable.

- The issue in focus is **Karbi Anglong**, erstwhile known as **Rengma Hills**. Rengma Hills are made the victims of aggressive influx of outsiders for vested interests.
- The **Rengma Hills was partitioned in 1963** between Assam and Nagaland at the time of creation of Nagaland State.

What are Autonomous District Council?

As per **the Sixth Schedule**, the four states viz. **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram** contain the **Tribal Areas which are technically different from the Scheduled Areas**.

Though these areas fall within the executive authority of the state, provision has been made for the creation of **the District Councils and regional councils** for the exercise of the certain legislative and judicial powers.

- Each district is an autonomous district and Governor can modify / divide the boundaries of the said Tribal areas by notification.

The Governor may, by public notification:

- (a) Include any area.
- (b) exclude any area.
- (c) create a new autonomous district.
- (d) increase the area of any autonomous district.
- (e) diminish the area of any autonomous district.
- (f) alter the name of any autonomous district.
- (g) define the boundaries of any autonomous district.

Constitution of District Councils and Regional Councils:

(1) There shall be a District Council for each autonomous district consisting of not more than thirty members, of whom not more than four persons shall be nominated by the Governor and the rest shall be elected on the basis of adult suffrage.

(2) There shall be a separate Regional Council for each area constituted an autonomous region.

(3) Each District Council and each Regional Council shall be a body corporate by the name respectively of the District Council of (name of district) and the Regional Council of (name of region), shall have perpetual succession and a common seal and shall by the said name sue and be sued.

InstaLinks:

Related to Autonomous Areas:

Know a few Autonomous areas created by International agreements. [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

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

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

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GRG8LDQA0.1&imageview=0>.

2. Delimitation in Jammu and Kashmir:

Context:

For Assembly elections to be held in Jammu and Kashmir, delimitation of seats will be necessary.

What is delimitation and why is it needed?

The **Delimitation Commission for Jammu and Kashmir was constituted by the Centre** on March 6 last year to redraw Lok Sabha and assembly constituencies of the union territory in accordance with the provisions of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, which bifurcated the state into union territories of J&K and Ladakh.

What is Delimitation?

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

Who carries out the exercise?

- Delimitation is undertaken by a highly powerful commission. They are formally known as Delimitation Commission or Boundary Commission.
- These bodies are so powerful that **its orders have the force of law and they cannot be challenged before any court**.

Composition of the Commission:

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

Constitutional Provisions:

1. Under **Article 82**, the Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act after every Census.
2. Under **Article 170**, States also get divided into territorial constituencies as per Delimitation Act after every Census.

Insta Curious:

Did you know that till August 2019, delimitation of Lok Sabha seats in J&K was governed by the Constitution of India, but **the delimitation of the state's Assembly seats was governed by the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution and Jammu and Kashmir Representation of the People Act, 1957**?

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Previous delimitation commissions- powers and functions.
2. Composition of the commission.
3. Who can set up?
4. Are changes allowed in final orders?

5. Which are the constitution provisions related?

Mains Link:

How and why delimitation of constituencies is carried out? Discuss.

Topics: Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure, devolution of powers and finances up to local levels and challenges therein.

1. Nagaland to form panel on Naga issue:

Context:

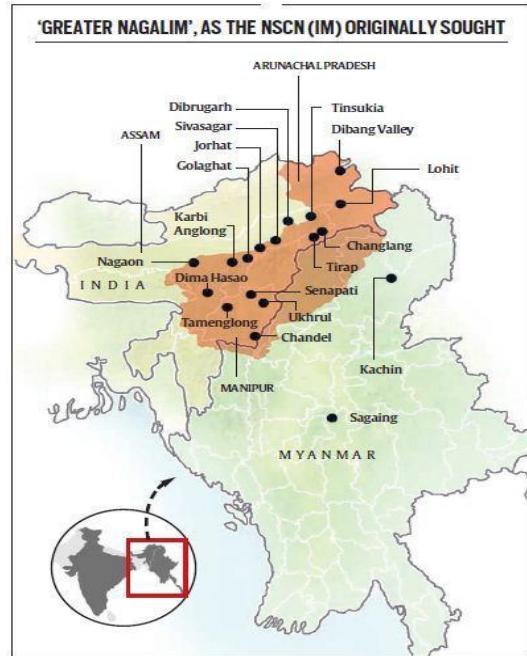
The Nagaland government has decided to institute a committee comprising Opposition leaders to pursue the lingering Naga peace agreement and the Naga political issue with the Centre.

- The panel is headed by Chief Minister Neiphiu Rio.

How old is the Naga political issue?

1. Pre- independence:

- The British annexed Assam in 1826, and in 1881, the Naga Hills too became part of British India. The first sign of Naga resistance was seen in the formation of the Naga Club in 1918, which told the Simon Commission in 1929 “to leave us alone to determine for ourselves as in ancient times”.
- In 1946 came the Naga National Council (NNC), which declared Nagaland an independent state on August 14, 1947.
- The NNC resolved to establish a “sovereign Naga state” and conducted a “referendum” in 1951, in which “99 per cent” supported an “independent” Nagaland.



2. Post- independence:

On March 22, 1952, the Naga Federal Government (NFG) and the Naga Federal Army (NFA) were formed. The Government of India sent in the Army to crush the insurgency and, in 1958, enacted [the Armed Forces \(Special Powers\) Act](#).

Agreement in this regard:

- The NSCN (IM) entered into a ceasefire agreement with the Centre in 1997 and the two have been holding talks since then, while a conglomerate of seven different Naga national political groups (NNPGs) also got into separate talks with the Centre since 2017.
- The Centre signed a “framework agreement” with NSCN (IM) in 2015, and an “agreed position” with the NNPGs in 2017. However, the NSCN (IM)’s demand for a separate Naga flag and constitution has been a delaying factor in signing a final deal on the protracted Naga political issue.

Insta Curious:

[Know how India's map has evolved since 1947,](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Parts of States included under Greater Nagaland.
2. About Naga Club and NNC.
3. When was the Naga Referendum held?
4. Overview of AFSPA.
5. Overview of Article 371 and sub provisions thereunder.

Mains Link:

Discuss the issues and challenges associated with the Naga Peace Accord.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GSE8LJGS7.1&imageview=0>

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

1. Recusal of Judges:

Context:

Justice Indira Banerjee has recused herself from hearing a petition filed by the families of two BJP activists killed allegedly in the post poll violence in West Bengal.

Background:

The petition alleged that there was “indiscriminate” killing of innocent people in West Bengal following the election results by the “vengeful” ruling party in the State.

What is Judicial Disqualification or Recusal?

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

Grounds for Recusal:

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

Are there any laws in this regard?

There are no definite rules on recusals by Judges.

- However, In taking oath of office, judges, both of the Supreme Court and of the high courts, promise to perform their duties, to deliver justice, “without fear or favour, affection or ill-will”.

What has the Supreme Court said on this?

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

Insta Curious:

Think: What if a judge fails to recuse themselves *sua sponte* and a party believes the judge has a bias?

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Grounds for Judicial Disqualification.
2. Who administers oath to Supreme Court and High Court judges?
3. Articles 127 and 128 of the Indian Constitution are related to?

Mains Link:

Recusal has become a selective call of morality for Supreme Court judges. Discuss.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GI68MBS2K.1&imageview=0>.

2. Shifting of jurisdiction of a High Court:

Context:

The Lakshadweep administration has mooted a proposal to shift its legal jurisdiction from the Kerala High Court to the Karnataka High Court.

Background:

The proposal was initiated by the administration after several litigations were moved before the Kerala High Court against the decisions taken by the islands’ new Administrator Praful Khoda Patel.

- These decisions included revising standard operating procedures for COVID- appropriate behaviour, introduction of the “goonda Act” and demolishing huts of fishermen for widening of roads.

Read [this](#) to know more about Lakshadweep development related issues.

What is the procedure to shift jurisdiction of a High Court?

The jurisdiction of a High Court can be shifted only through an Act of Parliament.

- **Article 241** states that Parliament may by law constitute a high court for a Union Territory or declare any court in any such territory to be a high court for all or any of the purposes of this Constitution.

- Section 4 of the same article mentions that “nothing in this Article derogates from the power of Parliament to extend or exclude the jurisdiction of a high court for a State to, or from, any Union Territory or part thereof”.

Challenges ahead:

Lakshadweep is under **Kerala High Court jurisdiction now**.

Also, **Malayalam is the spoken as well as the written language both in Kerala and Lakshadweep**.

Now, shifting of the jurisdiction of the high court will change the entire judicial system of the islands.

- It will break the bond of language.
- Also, the High Court in Kerala is just 400 kms away whereas that of Karnataka is over 1,000 kms with no direct connectivity as well.
- It would also mean extra-burden on the exchequer as all the cases, at present under trial, would have to be heard again afresh.

Insta Curious:

- Think! Can the Principal seat of a high court be shifted? If so, how? [Read Here](#)
- Do you know the difference between, Principal Seat, Permanent bench and circuit bench? [Read Here](#)
- How can the permanent bench or benches of the common High Court be established? [Read here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- Article 241 and sub provisions under it.
- Jurisdiction of High Courts.

- Legal jurisdiction of UTs in India.
- What is the procedure to shift jurisdiction of a High Court?
- Appointment of High Court Judges.

Mains Link:

The Lakshadweep administration has mooted a proposal to shift its legal jurisdiction from the Kerala High Court to the Karnataka High Court. Discuss the issues associated with this move.

Link: <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/news/national/plan-to-put-lakshadweep-under-karnataka-high-court/article34873604.ece/amp/>.

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

1. What is ranked choice voting, which made its debut in New York mayoral polls?

Context:

New York city used **ranked-choice voting** for Mayoral Polls.

What is it?

The method allows voters to rank candidates by preference rather than selecting just their top choice. New York City is having voters rank their top five — though voters are not required to choose five.

Benefits/rationale behind this process:

Ranking candidates is far more complicated, but advocates believe it is fairer and more accurately reflects the collective will of the majority.

How does it work?

- If someone gets 50% plus one after all the first-choice votes are counted, then the election is over and that candidate wins.
- But if no one gets 50% plus one, it's on to Round 2.
- The person with the lowest number of first-place votes is eliminated, and that candidate's voters' second choices get redistributed as votes for other candidates.
- This reallocation of votes goes on until someone reaches 50% plus one.

Where else has this been used?

There are some 20 jurisdictions across the country that use ranked-choice voting.

- It has also been used by **Australia, Ireland and Malta** since the early 20th century. **Northern Ireland, New Zealand and Scotland** have all adopted it as well.

What are the arguments in favor of it?

1. **It means the winner gets a majority of the vote.** The usual system of "most votes wins" can mean someone with only a plurality of the overall vote can be elected, not necessarily the person with majority support.
2. **More moderate candidates.** It's less likely that extreme candidates who have a strong base of support but aren't liked more broadly could get through in a crowded primary.
3. **Less negative campaigning.** The argument goes that candidates need a majority of voters to like them.
4. **People can feel good about casting their vote.** Instead of holding their nose for that one choice they get, voters can express at least a first choice for the person they really like.

What are the arguments against it?

1. It's complicated. And complications can lead to errors.
2. Some argue it's less democratic because it eschews the idea of one person, one vote.
3. It could encourage horse-trading. Ranked-choice voting might make for less strategic voting, but it could open the door for candidates to make deals with one another about who their voters should go for as a second choice.

Insta Curious:

Do you know What Approval Voting is? [Read Here](#)

3. What is First Past the Post system.

4. What is proportional representation system.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About the method.
2. Benefits.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of ranked choice voting system.

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

1. Monsoon session of Parliament likely to begin in July:

Context:

The monsoon [session of Parliament](#) is expected to begin on schedule in July.

- The last session of Parliament was curtailed and ended **sine die** on March 25 and **under the Constitutional norms, the next session has to be held within six months.** This period ends on September 14.

Background:

Three sessions have been curtailed since the pandemic began in March last year. First of these was the Budget session of 2020. The winter session last year was also cut short. Last year, the monsoon session, which usually starts in July, began in September.

What the Constitution says?

- [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 power to convene a session of Parliament rests with the government. The decision is taken by the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs. The decision of the Committee is formalised by the President, in whose name MPs are summoned to meet for a session.

Why is a Parliamentary Session important?

1. Law-making is dependent on when Parliament meets.

- 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.
- Predictability in the functioning of Parliament is key to a well-functioning democracy.

Insta Curious:

- Do you know, Half the world's population is under 30 and yet only 2.6% of MPs globally represent this age group? [Read Here](#)
Read Briefly about Inter-Parliamentary Union. ([CLICK HERE](#))

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- Who can Summon the Parliament?
- Article 85.
- Sessions of the Parliament.
- For how many days in a year the Parliament has to meet?

- Who chairs the joint sitting of the Parliament?

Mains Link:

Why is a Parliamentary Session important? Discuss.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GRG8LDQ8P.1&imageview=0>

2. Breach of privilege motion:

Context:

CPI MP Binoy Viswam has filed [a breach of privilege motion](#) against the Lakshadweep Administrator Praful K. Patel for denying him permission to visit the islands.

- The MP has said that **the Right of a parliamentarian to move freely and meet with the people is integral to the privilege of their position itself.**

Background:

The district administration has responded saying that the MP was not allowed to visit as per the Covid protocols in place.

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".

- Article 105 of the Constitution expressly mentions two privileges**, that is, freedom of speech in Parliament and right of publication of its proceedings.
- 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:

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?
3. Composition and functions of Privileges Committees in Parliament and State Legislatures.
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=GSE8LJGTB.1&imageview=0>

3. Public Accounts Committee (PAC):

Context:

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of Parliament has decided its agenda for the following year. Because a consensus could not be built, the subject of **vaccine production and distribution** was not accepted as one of the agendas of the PAC for this year.

- As per the panel's rules, **no subject can be deliberated upon till there is a consensus among all members.**

About PAC:

1. The PAC is formed every year with a strength of not more than 22 members of which 15 are from Lok Sabha and 7 from Rajya Sabha.
2. The term of office of the members is one year.
3. The Chairman is appointed by the Speaker of Lok Sabha. Since 1967, the chairman of the committee is selected from the opposition.
4. Its chief function is to examine [the audit report of Comptroller and Auditor General \(CAG\)](#) after it is laid in the Parliament.

Historical Background:

It is the oldest of all House panels. The Committee on Public Accounts was **first set up in 1921 in the wake of the Montague-Chelmsford Reforms.**

Limitations of the Public Accounts Committee:

1. Broadly, it cannot intervene in the questions of policy.
2. It can keep a tab on the expenses only after they are incurred. It has no power to limit expenses.
3. It cannot intervene in matters of day-to-day administration.
4. Any recommendation that the committee makes is only advisory. They can be ignored by the ministries.
5. It is not vested with the power of disallowance of expenditures by the departments.
6. Being only an executive body; it cannot issue an order. Only the Parliament can take a final decision on its findings.

Insta Curious:

Do you know why CAG has been re-appointed as the Chairman of the Panel of External Auditors of the United Nations (for the year 2021). Read Here

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

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

Mains Link:

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

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GCL8M5MK4.1&imageview=0>.

4. Parliamentary Privileges:

Context:

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh, who chairs the [Parliamentary Standing Committee on science and technology](#), has moved [a privilege motion](#) against news channel Times Now for “falsified and mischievous” reporting of the proceedings of the panel’s meeting.

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InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

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?

3. Composition and functions of Privileges Committees in Parliament and State Legislatures.
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=GE68NG1BJ.1&imageview=0>.

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

1. How are poll results challenged, and when courts have set them aside?

Context:

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has filed **an election petition** in the Calcutta High Court **challenging the Assembly election result of Nandigram constituency**, where she had contested and lost.

What's the issue?

She has sought that Suvendhu Adhikari's election be declared void on grounds of corrupt practice and discrepancies in the counting procedure conducted by [the Returning Officer](#).

What is an election petition?

Post results, an election petition is **the only legal remedy available to a voter or a candidate who believes there has been malpractice in an election.**

An election petition submitted to the High Court of the state in which the constituency is located.

Such a petition **has to be filed within 45 days from the date of the poll results**; nothing is entertained by courts after that.

- Although [the Representative of the People Act of 1951](#) suggests that the High Court should try to conclude the trial within six months, it usually drags on for much longer, even years.

Under Section 100 of the RP Act, an election petition can be filed on the grounds that:

1. **Section 123 of the RP Act** has a detailed list of what amounts to corrupt practice, including bribery, use of force or coercion, appeal to vote or refrain from voting on grounds of religion, race, community, and language.
2. **Improper acceptance** of the nomination of the winning candidate or improper rejection of a nomination.
3. **Malpractice** in the counting process, which includes improper reception, refusal or rejection of any vote, or the reception of any vote which is void.
4. **Non-compliance** with the provisions of the Constitution or the RP Act or any rules or orders made under the RP Act.

What happens if the court finds that a contention of malpractice is correct?

The verdict on an election petition, if found in favour of the petitioner, may result in a fresh election or the court announcing a new winner.

Famous examples:

- There are many examples, the most famous being the Allahabad High Court verdict of 1975 which set aside Indira Gandhi's election from Rae Bareli constituency, four years earlier, on grounds of corrupt practice.
- Another high-profile case was that of Congress leader C P Joshi's loss in the Rajasthan Assembly elections in 2008, by one vote.

Insta Curious:

Do you know what Voter Caging is? [Read Here](#)
(briefly)

InstaLinks:

[Prelims Link:](#)

- Key Provisions of RPA.
- Roles and powers of Returning Officer.
- Appeals against EC's orders.

Link:https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/a_ssembly-election-result-challenged-calcutta-hc-handigram-constituency-7365499/lite/

2. Electoral trust declares donation of Rs 3 crore through electoral bonds:

Context:

Paribartan Electoral Trust has anonymously disbursed Rs 3 crore it received from Birla Corporation in 2019-20 using [electoral bonds](#).

This is **the first time that an electoral trust has taken the bonds route** to disburse corporate donations to unnamed political parties.

- However, Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), an independent poll watchdog, has alleged that the use of electoral bonds route is "against the spirit" of the **Electoral Trusts Scheme, 2013 and Income Tax Rules, 1962**.

What's the issue now?

It is mandatory for trusts to furnish each and every detail about the donor contributing to the trust and to whom the donations have been distributed.

- But, Paribartan Electoral Trust has said that since the donation was made through electoral bonds, in terms of the **electoral bonds scheme**, "**information with regard to payee is not required to be disclosed**".

The Concern:

So the main concern now is that if Electoral trusts start adopting this precedent of donating through **bonds, which do not permit disclosure norms and discourage transparency rules/laws** then it is like going back in time before the Electoral Trusts Scheme, 2013 was incorporated.

- In such a scenario, it will be a complete mayhem of unfair practices i.e. total anonymity, unchecked and unlimited funding, free flow of black money circulation, corruption, foreign funding, corporate donations and related conflict of interest etc.
- Such a practice completely negates the very purpose behind the inception of the Electoral Trusts Scheme, 2013 and Rule 17CA of the I.T Rules, 1962.

About Electoral Trusts Scheme, 2013:

- Electoral Trust is a **non-profit organization** formed in India for orderly receiving of the contributions from any person.
- The scheme was notified by [the Central Board of Direct Taxes \(CBDT\)](#).
- Objectives of the Scheme:** To lay down a procedure for grant of approval to an electoral trust which will receive voluntary contributions and distribute the same to the political parties.
- The sole object of the electoral trust** is to distribute the contributions received by it to the political party, registered under section 29A of [the Representation of the People Act, 1951](#).
- These Electoral Trust companies are **not allowed to accept contributions from foreign citizens or companies**.
- The trust shall also maintain a list of persons from whom contributions have been received and to whom the same have been distributed.

The electoral trust may receive voluntary contributions from:

- An individual who is a citizen of India.
- A company which is registered in India.
- a firm or Hindu undivided family or an Association of persons or a body of individuals, resident in India.

Insta Curious:

Similar concept of political financing (especially in USA):

How An Electoral Bond Works



Do you know what Hard Money & Soft Money is? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What are electoral bonds?
2. Eligibility.

3. Denomination.
4. Features.
5. Who can issue these bonds?
6. About Electoral Trust scheme.

Mains Link:

Critically examine the effectiveness of electoral bonds in ensuring transparent political funding and suggest alternatives?

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

1. Election Commissioner:

Context:

Former Uttar Pradesh Chief Secretary Anup Chandra Pandey has been appointed as the new [Election Commissioner](#).

- The appointment of Pandey will restore the poll panel to its full strength as a three-member commission.

About Election commission of India:

The constitution under [article 324](#) provides for an Election Commission for the superintendence, direction and control of the preparation of the electoral rolls **for the conduct of elections to parliament, state legislatures and to the offices of president and vice president.**

- It was established in accordance with the Constitution on 25th January 1950 (celebrated as national voters' day).

Composition Election commission of India:

The constitution provides for the following provisions in relation to the composition of the election commission:

1. The election commission shall consist of the Chief Election Commissioner and a such number of other election commissioners, if any, **as the president may from time to time fix.**
2. The appointment of the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners shall be made by the president.
3. When any other election commissioner is so appointed the chief election commissioner shall act as the chairman of the election commission.
4. The president may also appoint after consultation with the election commission such regional commissioners as he may consider necessary to assist the election commission.
5. The conditions of service and tenure of office of the election commissioners and the regional commissioners shall be such as the President may by rule determine.

CEC vs ECs:

Though the Chief Election Commissioner is the chairman of the election commission, however, his powers are equal to the other election commissioners. **All the matters in the commission are decided by the majority amongst its members.** The Chief Election Commissioner and the two other election commissioners **receive equal salary, allowances and other benefits.**

Tenure:

The Chief Election Commissioner and other election commissioners hold office for **6 years or till they attain the age of 65 years**, whichever is earlier.

Removal:

They can resign anytime or can also be removed before the expiry of their term.

The Chief Election Commissioner can be removed from his office **in the same manner and on same grounds as a judge of the Supreme Court.**

Limitations:

1. The Constitution has **not prescribed the qualifications** (legal, educational, administrative or judicial) of the members of the Election Commission.
2. The Constitution has **not debarred the retiring election commissioners from any further appointment by the government.**

Insta Curious:

Have you heard of A-WEB (Association of World Election Bodies)? Is India a member ? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Article 243 vs 324, similarities and differences in powers of state election commissions vs Election Commission of India.
2. Appeals against decisions of Election Commissions.

3. Elections to Parliament and state legislatures vs Local Bodies.

Mains Link:

Are the State Election Commissions in India as independent as the Election Commission of India? Discuss.

2. Attorney-General:

Context:

The Union government has extended the tenure of [Attorney-General](#) K.K. Venugopal by a year. He will continue as the government's top law officer till June 30, 2022.

Attorney General- Facts:

The Attorney General for India is the central government's **chief legal advisor, and its primary lawyer in the Supreme Court of India.**

He is **a part of the Union Executive.**

Appointment and eligibility:

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

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

Powers and Functions:

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

Insta Curious:

Do you think the Attorney General of India has any executive Authority?

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

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

6. The Union Executive consists of?

Mains Link:

Discuss the roles and functions of AG.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GQH8NCTVV.1&imageview=0>.

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

1. National Commission for Protection of Child Rights (NCPCR):

Context:

Supreme Court is **suo motu** examining ways to protect children who have suffered personal loss and trauma due to the pandemic.

- In this regard, On May 28, the Court directed the Centre to state welfare measures for the children orphaned by the pandemic.
- The **NCPCR** and the States were also asked to compile data identifying children in need of immediate care.

Based on **Bal Swaraj**, an online tracking portal, NCPCR made the following submissions:

1. Nearly 10,000 children in the country are in immediate need of care and protection.
2. They include children aged between zero and 17 orphaned or abandoned during the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020.
3. These children ran a high risk of being pushed into trafficking and flesh trade.

Need for special attention:

The cataclysmic COVID-19 pandemic devastated the vulnerable sections of society. There are a number of children who have become orphans due to the demise of either the breadwinner of the family or of both their parents. These children need immediate and special attention from the authorities.

About NCPCR:

- Set up in March 2007 under [the Commission for Protection of Child Rights Act, 2005](#).
- It works under the administrative control of **the Ministry of Women & Child Development**.
- **The Commission's Mandate** is to ensure that all Laws, Policies, Programmes, and Administrative Mechanisms are in consonance with the Child Rights perspective as enshrined in the Constitution of India and also the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Under [the RTE Act, 2009](#), the NCPCR can:

1. inquire into complaints about violation of the law.
2. summon an individual and demand evidence.
3. seek a magisterial enquiry.
4. file a writ petition in the High Court or Supreme Court.
5. approach the government concerned for prosecution of the offender.
6. recommend interim relief to those affected.

Composition:

This commission has a chairperson and six members of which at least two should be women.

1. All of them are appointed by the Central Government for three years.
2. The maximum age to serve in commission is 65 years for Chairman and 60 years for members.

Insta Curious:

1. Related to Child Right & Protection: Do you know there is no Central law banning corporal punishment? Different States, however, have enacted laws or made policies to ban it. [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. NCPCR- composition and functions.
2. Powers of NCPCR under RTE Act.
3. Highlights of RTE Act.
4. Children covered under RTE.

5. About Bal Swaraj.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GRK8KP65F.1&imageview=0>.

2. Norms for employing retired officials defined:

Context:

The **Central Vigilance Commission (CVC)** has laid down a defined **procedure to be followed by government organisations** for getting vigilance clearance before **employing a retired official on a contractual or consultancy basis**.

As per the procedure:

1. **Applicability:** Before offering employment to retired All India Services and Group A officers of the Central government or their equivalent in other organisations owned or controlled by the Centre, vigilance clearance from the employer organisation, from which the officer has retired, should be obtained.
2. **In case a retired officer served in more than one organisation,** clearance has to be obtained from all of them where the person was posted in the 10 years prior to retirement.
3. **A communication seeking clearance should also be sent to the CVC.** If no reply is received from the erstwhile employer (s) within 15 days of sending the communication by speed post, a reminder can be sent. If there is no response within 21 days, vigilance clearance should be deemed to have been given.
4. **If the employee is found involved in any vigilance-related matter or not cleared from the vigilance point of view,** the erstwhile employer organisation would be responsible for all consequential actions.

Need for these rules:

The absence of a uniform procedure sometimes led to a situation where officials with **tainted past or cases pending against them were engaged**.

- Such a situation not only leads to unnecessary complaints/allegations of favouritism, but is also against the tenets of fairness and probity which is the basic principle governing the functioning of government organisations.

About CVC:

- The CVC was **set up by the Government in February, 1964** on the recommendations of **the Committee on Prevention of Corruption**, headed by **Shri K. Santhanam**.
- **In 2003**, the Parliament enacted CVC Act conferring **statutory status on the CVC**.
- The CVC is **not controlled by any Ministry/Department**. It is an independent body which is only responsible to the Parliament.
- It **submits its report to the President of India**.
- It exercises superintendence over the functioning of **the Delhi Special Police Establishment (CBI)** insofar as it relates to the investigation of offences under **the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988**.

Read more about CVC- composition and removal of members [here](#),

Insta Curious:

Do you know, Vigilance Awareness Week (VAW) is being celebrated every year during the last week of October and coincides with the birthday of [Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel](#), known to be a man of high integrity? [Read Here](#) (Know the themes of VAW of recent years)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About CVC.
2. Appointment.
3. Removal.
4. Powers and functions.
5. Reports.
6. Latest guidelines on appointment of retired government officials.

Mains Link:

Discuss the roles and functions of CVC.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G748KVCNG.1&imageview=0>.

3. ED transfers assets worth ₹8,441.50 cr. to banks:

Context:

The **Enforcement Directorate** has transferred assets worth ₹8,441.50 crore to public sector banks that suffered losses to the tune of ₹22,585.83 crore due to frauds committed allegedly by Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi.

What's the issue?

ED had taken up a money laundering probe which helped unearth a complex web of domestic and international transactions and stashing of assets abroad by the accused persons and their associates.

- They had used dummy entities controlled by them for rotation and siphoning of the funds provided by the banks.
- But, All three accused had fled overseas.
- Prosecution complaints were filed against all the three accused after completion of the investigation under [the Prevention of Money Laundering Act](#).

In the net | Assets worth ₹18,170.02 crore have been seized in the money laundering cases against businessmen Vijay Mallya, Nirav Modi and Mehul Choksi.

DETAILS OF SOME OF THE ASSETS

VIJAY MALLYA CASE

- Bank balance of ₹34 crore
- Two flats in Bengaluru and Mumbai
- 4.5 acre industrial plot in Chennai
- 28.75 acre coffee plantation in Coorg
- Properties in UB City and Kingfisher Tower in Bengaluru
- Property worth 1.6 million euro in Paris



NIRAV MODI-MEHUL CHOKSI CASE



- Six residential flats, 10 office premises in Mumbai
- Solar power plant and 135 acres of land in Ahmednagar's Karjat
- One windmill in Jaisalmer
- Residential flats in the United Arab Emirates
- Artworks of Amrita Sher-Gil, M.F. Husain; luxury cars, watches and handbags
- Factory worth ₹13.14 crore in Thailand
- One property in London and two in New York
- Valuables worth about ₹255 crore in Hong Kong

Present status of extradition:

1. The extradition of Mr. Mallya has been ordered by the Westminster Magistrates Court and confirmed by the U.K. High Court. The matter is pending with the U.K.'s Home Department for quite some time now.
2. The Westminster Magistrates Court had also ordered the extradition of Mr. Modi to India.
3. Mr. Choksi was recently found in Dominica.

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.

Other functions:

1. Processing cases of fugitive/s from India under [Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018](#).
2. Sponsor cases of preventive detention under [Conservation of Foreign Exchange and Prevention of Smuggling Activities Act, 1974\(COFEOUSA\)](#) in regard to contraventions of FEMA.

Special courts:

For the trial of an offence punishable under **section 4 of PMLA**, the Central Government (in consultation with the Chief Justice of the High Court), designates one or more Sessions Court as Special Court(s). The court is also called “PMLA Court”.

- Any appeal against any order passed by PMLA court can directly be filed in the High Court for that jurisdiction.

Insta Curious:

Do you know the difference between Deportation and Exile? [Read Here](#)

5. Which all departments have administered it?

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is FEMA?
2. What is PMLA?
3. What is COFEPOSA?
4. Historical background of ED.

Mains Link:

How has ED become the weapon of choice today?
Discuss.

Link: <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/news/national/ed-transfers-assets-of-vijay-mallya-nirav-modi-mehul-choksi-worth-844150-cr-to-banks/article34922424.ece/amp/>.

4. Gujarat International Maritime Arbitration Centre (GIMAC):

Context:

The [Gujarat Maritime University](#) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the **International Financial Services Centres Authority** in GIFT City to promote the **Gujarat International Maritime Arbitration Centre (GIMAC)**.

- The GIMAC will be part of [a maritime cluster](#) that is being set up by the Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB) in GIFT City at Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

Functions of GIMAC:

This will be the first centre of its kind in the country that will manage arbitration and mediation proceedings with disputes related to the maritime and shipping sector.

Why is the GIMAC being set up?

The idea is to create a world-class arbitration centre focused on maritime and shipping disputes that can help resolve commercial and financial conflicts between entities having operations in India.

- There are over 35 arbitration centres in India but none of them exclusively deals with the maritime sector.
- The arbitration involving Indian players is now heard at the Singapore Arbitration Centre.

What is GIFT City?

The Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) is a business district near Ahmedabad in Gujarat, India.

- It is India's first operational Greenfield smart city and international financial services centre, which the Government of Gujarat promoted as a Greenfield project.
- The city is located on the banks of the Sabarmati River.

What are International Financial Services Centres (IFSC)?

- An IFSC caters to customers outside the jurisdiction of the domestic economy.
- Such centres deal with flows of finance, financial products and services across borders.
- London, New York and Singapore can be counted as global financial centres.

Services an IFSC can provide:

1. Fund-raising services for individuals, corporations and governments.

2. Asset management and global portfolio diversification undertaken by pension funds, insurance companies and mutual funds.
3. Wealth management.
4. Global tax management and cross-border tax liability optimization, which provides a business opportunity for financial intermediaries, accountants and law firms.
5. Global and regional corporate treasury management operations that involve fund-raising, liquidity investment and management and asset-liability matching.
6. Risk management operations such as insurance and reinsurance.
7. Merger and acquisition activities among trans-national corporations.

Insta Curious:

Do you know the difference between Greenfield vs. Brownfield Investments? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is a maritime Cluster?
2. What is the International Financial Service Centre?
3. Can they be set up in SEZs?
4. India's first IFSC.

5. Services they provide?

6. Limitations.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of international financial services centres.

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

1. It's time to define limits of sedition, says SC:

Context:

The Supreme Court has said “**it is time to define the limits of sedition**”.

- The observation was made while dealing with the writ petitions filed by two news channels seeking the quashing of FIR and contempt petitions.

What's the case?

The Andhra Government had slapped [charges against two Telugu news channels](#) — TV5 and ABN Andhra Jyothi for alleged sedition in showing ‘offensive’ speeches of two leaders.

Petitioners' arguments:

They said the government's action is a violation of the earlier [SC order \(April 30\)](#), which **restrains the arrest and prosecution against citizens for ventilating grievances with respect to Covid-19 issues**.

What next?

The court has sought the response of the state government within four weeks on the pleas of the channels which are charged for various offences including the harsh penal offence of sedition.

General observations made by the Court on Sedition:

- It is time we define the limits of sedition.
- Provisions of **124A (sedition) and 153 (promoting enmity between classes)** of the IPC require interpretation, particularly on the issue of the rights of press and free speech.

Background:

The sedition law has been indiscriminately used against critics, journalists, social media users, activists and citizens for airing their grievances about the governments COVID-19 management, or even for seeking help to gain medical access, equipment, drugs and oxygen cylinders, especially during the second wave of the pandemic.

What is sedition?

Section 124A of the IPC states, "Whoever, by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation, or otherwise, brings or attempts to bring into hatred or contempt, or excites or attempts to excite disaffection towards, the government established by law in shall be punished with imprisonment for life, to which fine may be added, or with imprisonment which may extend to three years, to which fine may be added, or with fine."

Need for a proper definition?

The sedition law has been in controversy for far too long. Often the governments are criticized for using the law — **Section 124-A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC)** — against vocal critics of their policies.

- Therefore, this Section is seen as a restriction of individuals' freedom of expression and falls short of the provisions of reasonable restrictions on freedom of speech under **Article 19 of the Constitution**.

The law has been in debate ever since it was brought into force by the colonial British rulers in 1860s. Several top freedom movement leaders including **Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru** were booked under the **sedition law**.

1. Mahatma Gandhi described it as the “prince among the political sections of the Indian Penal Code designed to suppress the liberty of the citizen.”
2. Nehru had described it as “highly objectionable and obnoxious” which “should have no place in any body of laws that we might pass”. Nehru said, “The sooner we get rid of it the better.”

Relevant Supreme Court judgements:

1. The Kedar Nath Singh vs State of Bihar case (1962):

While dealing with offences under Section 124A of the IPC, a **five-judge Supreme Court constitutional bench** had, in the **Kedar Nath Singh vs State of Bihar case (1962)**, laid down some guiding principles.

- The court ruled that comments—however strongly worded—expressing disapprobation of the actions of the government without causing public disorder by acts of violence would not be penal.

2. The Balwant Singh vs State of Punjab (1995) case:

In this case, the Supreme Court had clarified that merely shouting slogans, in this case Khalistan Zindabad, does not amount to sedition. Evidently, the sedition law is being both misunderstood and misused to muzzle dissent.

Insta Curious:

Despite having so many negatives, why do we still have this law? Read here:

<https://www.insightsonindia.com/2021/05/20/insights-into-editorial-unwarranted-arrest-on-sedition-charges/>.

InstaLinks:

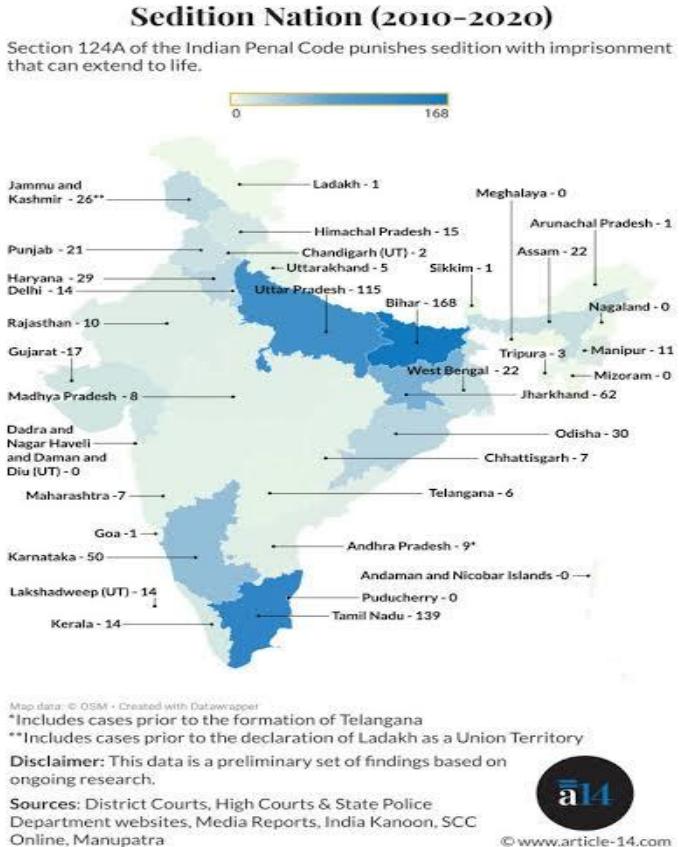
Prelims Link:

1. Where is sedition defined?
2. Section 124A of the IPC is related to?
3. Section 153 of the IPC is related to?
4. Relevant Supreme Court judgments.

5. Article 19 of the Indian Constitution.

Mains Link:

Discuss the issues associated with the imposition of Sedition law in India.



Link:<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/news/national/its-time-to-define-limits-of-sedition-says-sc/article34688053.ece/amp/>.

2. What is the negative imports list for defence?

Context:

The Defence Ministry has notified the second negative import list — now renamed as the ‘positive indigenisation list’ — of 108 items that can now be only purchased from indigenous sources. The new list takes the total number on the list to 209.

- The list comprises complex systems, sensors, simulator, weapons and ammunitions like helicopters, next generation corvettes, Air Borne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) systems, tank engines.

Significance and implications of this move:

1. Recognises the potential of local defence industry.
2. Invigorate impetus to domestic Research and Development by attracting fresh investment into technology and manufacturing capabilities.
3. Provides an excellent opportunity for ‘start-ups’ as also Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).

What is the negative imports list policy?

Introduced in August 2020, the negative list essentially means that the Armed Forces—Army, Navy and Air Force—will only procure such items from domestic manufacturers.

- The manufacturers could be private sector players or Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs).

Why was this policy needed? What will be the impacts?

As per Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, India has been the second largest importer between 2014 and 2019 with US\$ 16.75 billion worth of imports during this period.

- The government wants to reduce the dependence on imported items in defence and give a shot in the arm to the domestic defence manufacturing industry.
- By denying the possibility of importing the items on the negative list, the domestic industry is given the opportunity to step up and manufacture them for the needs of the forces.

Insta Curious:

Report on trends in global military expenditure: <https://www.insightsonindia.com/2021/04/28/report-on-trends-in-global-military-expenditure/>.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. When was this policy introduced?
2. Features.
3. Exceptions.
4. Implementing ministry.

Mains Link:

Discuss the need for and significance of the policy.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GFV8KM7L5.1&imageview=0>.

3. Model Tenancy Act:

Context:

The Union Cabinet has approved [the Model Tenancy Act \(MTA\)](#).

- States and Union territories can now adopt the Model Tenancy Act by enacting fresh legislation or they can amend their existing rental laws suitably.

Highlights of the Model Law:

1. Applicable prospectively and will not affect the existing tenancies.



Model Tenancy Act

- Will not affect the existing tenancies
- Written agreement must for all new tenancies
- Separate rent authorities, courts and tribunals to be set up in every district
- States and Union territories can adopt Model Tenancy Act by enacting fresh legislation or they can amend their existing rental laws suitably

TOI

2. **Written agreement is a must** for all new tenancies. The agreement will have to be submitted to the concerned district 'Rent Authority'.
3. The law also speaks about roles and responsibilities of landlord and tenants.
4. **No landlord or property manager can withhold any essential supply** to the premises occupied by the tenant.
5. **If tenancy has not been renewed**, the tenancy shall be deemed to be renewed on a month-to-month basis on the same terms and conditions as were in the expired tenancy agreement, for a maximum period of six months.
6. **Compensation in case of non-vacancy:** On the expiry of extended period of six months of agreed tenancy period or the termination of tenancy by order or notice, the tenant shall be a tenant in default and liable to pay **compensation of double of the monthly rent for two months and four times of the monthly rent thereafter.**
7. **A landowner or property manager may enter a premise in accordance with written notice or notice through electronic medium** served to the tenant at least twenty-four hours before the time of entry.

Significance:

It is an important piece of legislation that promises **to ease the burden on civil courts, unlock rental properties stuck in legal disputes, and prevent future tangles** by balancing the interests of tenants and landlords.

Need for a law in this regard:

1. Young, educated job seekers migrating to large metropolises often complain of **onerous tenancy conditions and obscene sums of money as security deposits** that they are asked to fork out to lease accommodation. In some cities, tenants are asked to pay security deposits amounting to 11 months of rent.
2. Also, some house owners routinely **breach tenants' right to privacy** by visiting the premises unannounced for sundry repair works.
3. Whimsical **rent raises** are another problem for tenants, many of whom complain of being squeezed as "captive customers".
4. Besides, Tenants are often accused of "**squatting**" on the rented premises, or trying to grab the property.

Insta Curious:

Did you know land tenures including the relation of landlord and tenant, and the collection of rents are subjects under the state list of the Indian Constitution (7th Schedule)? Read more here, <https://www.google.com/amp/s/blog.ipleaders.in/7th-schedule-of-the-indian-constitution/amp/>.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About the Model law- Highlights.
2. Role of states.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance and relevance of the Model Tenancy Act.

4. Digital tax in India:

Context:

The United States recently announced **25% tariffs on over \$2 billion worth of imports from six nations over their digital services taxes**, but immediately suspended the duties to allow time for international tax negotiations to continue.

- The **U.S. Trade Representative's** office had approved the threatened tariffs on goods from **Britain, Italy, Spain, Turkey, India and Austria** after a "**Section 301**" investigation concluded that their digital taxes discriminated against U.S. companies.
- The potential tariffs aim **to equal the amount of digital taxes that would be collected from U.S. firms.**

About the Digital Tax:

India was the one of the first countries to introduce a **6 per cent equalisation levy in 2016**, but the levy was restricted to online advertisement services.

However, India introduced the digital tax in April 2020 for foreign companies selling goods and services online to customers in India and showing annual revenues more than INR 20 million.

Applicability:

India has expanded the scope of the equalisation levy over the last few years, to tax non-resident digital entities.

- While the levy applied only to digital advertising services till 2019-20 at the rate of 6 percent, the government in April last year widened the scope to impose a 2 per cent tax on non-resident e-commerce players with a turnover of Rs 2 crore.
- The scope was further widened in the Finance Act 2021-22 to cover e-commerce supply or service when any activity takes place online.
- Since May 2021, this also includes any entity that systematically and continuously does business with more than 3 lakh users in India.

When will the tax not apply?

Offshore e-commerce firms that sell through an Indian arm will not have to pay.

- This means if the goods and services sold on a foreign e-commerce platform are owned or provided by an Indian resident or Indian permanent establishment, they will not be subject to the two percent equalization levy.

Why was it imposed?

The equalisation levy was imposed "to give level playing field between Indian businesses who pay tax in India and foreign e-commerce companies who do business in India but do not pay any income tax here."

Which other countries impose such a levy on digital sellers?

1. France imposes a three percent digital services tax.
2. In the ASEAN region, Singapore, Indonesia, and Malaysia impose a digital service tax with Thailand announcing forthcoming plans to tax its foreign digital service providers.
3. Negotiations are underway at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) involving 140 countries to overhaul international tax rules given the fast growth of internet economies.

Why the United States Trade Representative (USTR) says that this tax is discriminatory?

1. First, it states that the DST discriminates against US digital businesses because it specifically excludes from its ambit domestic (Indian) digital businesses.
2. USTR also says the DST is discriminatory because it does not extend to identical services provided by non-digital service providers.

Why India says Digital services tax is not discriminatory? And why is it needed?

- Business models employed by non-resident digital service providers obviate the need for a physical presence in India and profits earned here could easily escape the Indian income tax net. Hence, this kind of taxation is necessary.
- Changing International Economic Order: Countries such as India which provide large markets for digital corporations seek a greater right to tax incomes.

Associated Concerns:

1. Eventually the tax may become a burden for Digital Consumers.
2. It could invite retaliatory tariffs (such as the latest one), as similar tariffs were imposed by the US on France.
3. It would also result in double taxation.

Insta Curious:

1. Is India's Digital Services Tax discriminatory? [Read here](#),
2. Did you know the Special 301 Report is prepared annually by USTR identifies trade barriers to United States companies and products due to the intellectual property laws in other countries? [Read here](#),

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About the equalization levy.
2. Applicability.
3. Exceptions.
4. Other countries with similar taxes.

Link: <https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GDF8KRVBM.1&imageview=0>.

5. About OECD.

Mains Link: Discuss the issues associated with the implementation of equalization levy.

5. Indemnity from liability:

Context:

Amid an acute vaccine crisis in the country, India is expected to grant **indemnity** to foreign vaccine makers including Pfizer and Moderna which would make it easier for their Covid vaccines to come to India.

- Now, **Serum Institute** has become the latest pharma company to ask for **indemnity from liability**, stating that **all vaccine manufacturers, whether Indian or foreign, should be protected against legal suits for any severe side effects.**

What is indemnity clause?

In simple terms, **indemnity means security against a loss or other financial stress.**

- In legal terms, it means a **contractual obligation of one party to compensate another party due to the acts of the former.**
- The clause is **commonly used in insurance contracts.**

In the case of India, if the government gives an indemnity to foreign vaccine makers to roll out their vaccine in the country, **the government, and not the vaccine maker, would be liable to compensate any citizen who claims to have side effects after taking the vaccine jab.**

What are 'Bridging trials'?

'Bridging trials' are **localised clinical trials which generate data related to the impact of foreign medicines/vaccines on the indigenous population before they are rolled out for the public.** These trials are important in ascertaining the efficacy and potential side-effects related to the medicine/vaccine.

- Besides clearance on indemnity clause, foreign vaccine makers including Pfizer and Moderna had sought relaxation on the requirement for a post-approval bridging trial for its vaccine.

Are there any exceptions to indemnification?

There are a number of common exceptions to indemnification.

An indemnification provision may exclude indemnification for claims or losses that result from the indemnified party's:

1. Negligence or gross negligence.
2. Improper use of the products.
3. Bad faith failure to comply with its obligations in the agreement.

Insta Curious:

An indemnity claim may be brought before breach of contract, whereas damages claim can only be brought after the breach of a contract. Read more about this, [here](#).

Did you know that The WHO has launched a nofault compensation programme for Covid-19 vaccines through the Covax alliance? Read here, <https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/22-02-2021-no-fault-compensation-programme-for-covid-19-vaccines-is-a-world-first>.

Do you know what Contract Novation is? [Read Here](#) (Another Concept to Safeguard the interests in a contract)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is indemnity clause?

2. Where it is oftenly used?

3. Benefits of the clause.

4. Important Vaccines being imported into India.

Mains Link:
Discuss the significance of Indemnity clause.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G748KVD18.1&imageview=0>.

6. NPR slips valid for long-term visas:

Context:

Union Home Ministry has clarified that **migrants belonging to six non-Muslim minority communities from Afghanistan, Pakistan and Bangladesh**, while applying for **long-term visas (LTVs)**, can also produce **National Population Register (NPR)** enrolment slips as proof of the duration of their stay in India.

Background:

The **NPR number** is part of an illustrative **list of more than 10 documents that could be provided to apply for an LTV**, which is a precursor to **acquiring Indian citizenship either by naturalisation or registration** under Section 5 and 6 of the **Citizenship Act, 1955**, for the six communities — **Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Parsis, Christians and Buddhists** — from the three countries.

- The special provision of LTVs for Hindus and Sikhs from Pakistan and Afghanistan was first made in 2011.

What are **LTVs**?

For foreigners of non-Indian origin, a longer-term visa is classed as one that permits the holder to stay in India for longer than 180 days (six months) continuously. The main visas that provide this are the Employment, Entry and Student visas.

Benefits of LTV:

- People belonging to minority communities from neighbouring countries having LTVs are allowed to purchase a small house for their family and can even establish a business.
- They are eligible to obtain Aadhaar card, PAN card and driving licences. The LTV also allows them to buy property.

What is **NPR**?

The NPR was **first compiled in 2010** simultaneously with the decadal Census exercise and later updated in 2015.

The NPR is a **register of usual residents** linked with location particulars down to the village level and is updated periodically “to incorporate the changes due to birth, death and migration”.

- The next phase of the NPR, expected to include contentious questions on date and place of birth of father and mother, last place of residence and mother tongue.
- The next phase was to be simultaneously updated with the 2021 House Listing and Housing Census but has been indefinitely postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Acquisition and Determination of Indian Citizenship:

There are **four ways in which Indian citizenship can be acquired**: birth, descent, registration and naturalisation. The provisions are listed under **the Citizenship Act, 1955**.

By Registration:

Citizenship can also be acquired by registration. Some of the mandatory rules are:

1. A person of Indian origin who has been a resident of India for 7 years before applying for registration.
2. A person of Indian origin who is a resident of any country outside undivided India.
3. A person who is married to an Indian citizen and is ordinarily resident for 7 years before applying for registration.
4. Minor children of persons who are citizens of India.

By Naturalisation:

- A person can acquire citizenship by naturalisation if he/she is ordinarily resident of India for 12 years (throughout 12 months preceding the date of application and 11 years in the aggregate) and fulfils all qualifications in the third schedule of the Citizenship Act.

Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA):

- The amendment provides that **the Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians** from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan, who entered India on or before **December 31, 2014**, will not be treated as illegal migrants.
- For these groups of persons, **the 11 years' requirement will be reduced to five years.**

Insta Curious:

1. Did you know that the process of updating NPR will be carried out under the aegis of the Registrar General and ex-Officio Census Commissioner, India? Know all about NPR here, <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.indiatoday.in/amp/india/story/explainer-what-is-npr-national-population-register-nrc-census-1631251-2019-12-24>.
2. Are you aware of the security features of 'Aadhaar PVC Card'? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Constitutional provisions related to Citizenship.
2. Components of NPR data.
3. Who is an usual resident?
4. Who prepares NPR?
5. How can a person acquire Indian citizenship?
6. Can an Indian citizen hold dual citizenship?

7. What are long term visas?

8. Latest amendments to the Citizenship Act.

Mains Link:

Why are states opposed to the collection of data under NPR. Discuss.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G9R8L7HGO.1&imageview=0>.

7. SC urged to stop illegal adoption:

Context:

The Supreme Court has agreed to intervene after [the National Commission for Protection of Child Rights \(NCPCR\)](#) sounded the alarm on a spate of complaints about illegal adoption of COVID orphans through private individuals and organisations.

What's the issue?

NCPCR statistics shows that 3,621 children were orphaned, 26,176 children lost either parent and 274 children were abandoned between April 1, 2021 to June 5, 2021. The second wave of the pandemic was at its worst form during this period, leaving a trail of death across the country.

- NCPCR had received many complaints in May that **private individuals and organisations have been actively collecting data on these children while claiming that they want to assist families and children in adoption.**
- Social media posts are circulating that children are up for adoption. This is plainly illegal and violates [the Juvenile Justice Act](#).
- The Act also **prohibits the disclosure of identity of children** with regard to the name, school, age, address or any information which would reveal the essential details of the child.

What is the procedure to be followed with children who have been orphaned?

1. If someone has information about a child in need of care, then they must contact one of the four agencies: Childline 1098, or the district Child Welfare Committee (CWC), District Child Protection Officer (DCPO) or the helpline of the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights.
2. Following this, the CWC will assess the child and place him or her in the immediate care of a Specialised Adoption Agency.
3. When there is a child without a family, the State becomes the guardian.

About JJ Act, 2015:

1. **Aim:** To comprehensively address children in conflict with law and children in need of care and protection.
2. **It mandates setting up Juvenile Justice Boards and Child Welfare Committees** in every district. Both must have at least one-woman member each.
3. Also, **the Central Adoption Resource Authority (CARA)** was granted **the status of a statutory body** to enable it to perform its function more effectively.
4. All Child Care Institutions, whether run by State Government or by voluntary or non-governmental organisations are to be **mandatorily registered under the Act within 6 months from the date of commencement of the Act.**

Insta Curious:

Did you know about the Eligibility criteria for prospective adoptive parents? [Read here](#),

Read in brief about Adoption Procedure For Non-Resident Indian, Overseas Citizens Of India And Foreign Prospective Adoptive Parents. [Read Here](#)

Do you know what Adoption Medicine is? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Key Provisions.
2. About CARA.
3. Registration of Childcare institutions as per the Act.
4. Latest amendments proposed.

5. About NCPNR.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of Juvenile Justice law.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G268LAKD5.1&imageview=0>.

8. Vehicle scrappage policy:

Context:

Finance and Corporate Affairs Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has called for expediting the implementation of **the vehicle scrappage policy**.

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.

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 BS VI vehicles will not be fully leveraged.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about the International Ship Recycling Convention, also known as the Hong Kong Convention?

[Read Here](#)

Do you know about the Green Tax? [Read here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Key features of the policy.
2. Applicability.
3. Incentives.

Mains Link:

Discuss the issues associated with the policy.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G4V8LMRMB.1&imageview=0>

9. National Food Security Act (NFSA):

Context:

The Centre has informed the Supreme Court that the States and the Union Territories have purchased nearly 3.7 lakh tonnes of foodgrains at concessional rates from [the Food Corporation of India](#) this year to supply to migrants without ration cards and others outside the protective cover of [the National Food Security Act \(NFSA\)](#).

- With this, the centre has debunked apprehensions raised in court that those without ration cards may be left to die amid a devastating pandemic.

Background:

The Supreme Court had asked the Centre to explain “how food will reach migrant labourers without ration cards”.

Context:

Centre amends Food Security rules **to prevent ration leakage, corruption.**

- The government said that this amendment has been made as an attempt to take forward the reform process envisaged under [Section 12 of the National Food Security Act \(NFSA\), 2013](#) by way of improving **the transparency of the operation of the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) under NFSA.**

Significance:

1. This amendment aims to ensure the right quantity to beneficiaries in the distribution of subsidised food grains under [the National Food Security Act \(NFSA\), 2013](#) as per their entitlement.
2. It also **incentivizes states who have been using ePoS efficiently** and encourages states to improve efficiency in ePoS operations and generate savings.

The amendment:

According to the amendment, states that are operating their ePoS devices judiciously and are able to generate savings from the additional margin of Rs 17 per quintal can now utilise the savings for purchase, operations and maintenance of electronic weighing scales and their integration with the point of sale devices.

National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013:

The objective is to provide for food and nutritional security in human life cycle approach, by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity.

Key features:

Coverage and entitlement under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS): The TPDS covers 50% of the urban population and 75% of the rural population, with uniform entitlement of 5 kg per person per month. However, the poorest of the poor households will continue to receive 35 kg of food grains per household per month under **Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY).**

Subsidised prices under TPDS and their revision: For a period of three years from the date of commencement of the Act, Food grains under TPDS will be made available at subsidised prices of Rs. 3/2/1 per kg for rice, wheat and coarse grains.

Identification of Households: The identification of eligible households is to be done by States/UTs under TDPS determined for each State.

Nutritional Support to women and children: Children in the age group of 6 months to 14 years and pregnant women and lactating mothers will be entitled to meals as per prescribed nutritional norms under Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) and Mid-Day Meal (MDM) schemes. Malnourished children up to the age of 6 have been prescribed for higher nutritional norms.

Maternity Benefit: Pregnant women and lactating mothers will also be receiving maternity benefit of Rs. 6,000.

Women Empowerment: For the purpose of issuing of ration cards, eldest woman of the household of age 18 years or above is to be the head of the household.

Grievance Redressal Mechanism: Grievance redressal mechanism available at the District and State levels.

Cost of transportation & handling of food grains and Fair Price Shop (FPS) Dealers' margin: the expenditure incurred by the state on transportation of food grains within the State, its handling and FPS dealers' margin as per norms to be devised for this purpose and assistance to states will be provided by the Central Government to meet the above expenditure.

Transparency and Accountability: In order to ensure transparency and accountability, provisions have been made for disclosure of records relating to PDS, **social audits and setting up of Vigilance Committees**.

Food Security Allowance: In case of non-supply of entitled food grains or meals, there is a provision for food security allowance to entitled beneficiaries.

Penalty: If the public servant or authority fails to comply with the relief recommended by the District Grievance Redressal Officer, penalty will be imposed by the State Food Commission according to the provision.

Insta Curious:

Do you know the differences between PDS and TPDS? Read [here](#)

5. Overview of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme.
6. Overview of Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme.
7. The responsibility of 3. Identification of Households under the scheme.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About TPDS.
2. Who gets food security allowance under the scheme?
3. Provisions of penalty under the act.
4. Maternity benefits related provisions.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GDP8LVBGL.1&imageview=0>.

10. Union Home Ministry order invites citizenship

Context: Union Home Ministry order inviting citizenship applications faces Supreme Court challenge. A recent petition filed in the Supreme Court said the government order “utterly discriminates and deprives a class of persons namely, the Muslims”.

Background:

The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 seeks to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955.

1. The Citizenship Act, 1955 provides various ways in which citizenship may be acquired.
2. It provides for citizenship by birth, descent, registration, naturalisation and by incorporation of the territory into India.

About CAA:

3. The objective of the CAA is to grant Indian citizenship to persecuted minorities — Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Parsi and Christian — from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.
4. Those from these communities who had come to India till December 31, 2014, facing religious persecution in their respective countries, will not be treated as illegal immigrants but given Indian citizenship.

5. The Act provides that the central government may cancel the registration of OCIs on certain grounds.

Exceptions:

1. The Act does not apply to tribal areas of Tripura, Mizoram, Assam and Meghalaya because of being included in the 6th Schedule of the Constitution.
2. Also areas that fall under the Inner Limit notified under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873, will also be outside the Act's purview.

Issues surrounding the law:

1. It violates the basic tenets of the Constitution. Illegal immigrants are distinguished on the basis of religion.
2. It is perceived to be a demographic threat to indigenous communities.
3. It makes illegal migrants eligible for citizenship on the basis of religion. This may violate Article 14 of the Constitution which guarantees the right to equality.
4. It attempts to naturalise the citizenship of illegal immigrants in the region.
5. It allows cancellation of OCI registration for violation of any law. This is a wide ground that may cover a range of violations, including minor offences.

InstaCurious:

Do you know What Safe-Conduct is in International Law? Read Here

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/safe-conduct>

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About CAA.
2. Features.
3. Religions covered.

4. Countries Covered.

5. Exceptions.

Mains Link: Discuss the issues surrounding the implementation of CAA.

11. Govt amends Cable TV network rules:

Context:

The Information and Broadcasting Ministry has amended the **Cable Television Network Rules, 1994** regulating Cable TV networks, providing for a “statutory” mechanism for complaints raised by citizens regarding any content broadcast.

Overview of Cable Television Networks (Amendment) Rules, 2021:

1. It provides for a three-level grievance redressal mechanism — self-regulation by broadcasters, self-regulation by the self-regulating bodies of the broadcasters, and oversight by an Inter-Departmental Committee at the level of the Union government.

Procedure for grievance redressal:

1. A viewer can file a complaint directly to the **broadcaster**, who will have to respond within 15 days.
2. If the complainant is not satisfied with the response, the complaint can be escalated to the self-regulating bodies set up by TV channels, which should deal with the case in 60 days.
3. If the complainant is not satisfied with the decision of the self-regulating body, he may, within 15 days of such decision, prefer an appeal to the Central Government for its consideration under the Oversight Mechanism.
4. Such appeals will be dealt with by the **Inter-Departmental Committee** set up under the Oversight Mechanism.

Composition of the committee:

The committee will be headed by the Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, and have members from various ministries.

Powers of the committee:

1. Recommend the Centre to advise, issue a warning, censure, admonish or reprimand a broadcaster, or seek an apology.
2. Ask the broadcaster to include a warning card or a disclaimer, or to delete or modify content, or take the channel or a programme off-air for a specified time period, where it is satisfied that such action is warranted.

Present Grievance redressal mechanism:

At present, there is an institutional mechanism by way of an Inter-Ministerial Committee to address the grievances of citizens relating to the violation of the Programme/Advertising Codes under the Rules, but **it does not have statutory backing**.

Significance of the new rules:

1. It paves the way “for a strong institutional system for redressing grievances.”
2. It places **accountability and responsibility on the broadcasters and their self-regulating bodies**.

About [the Cable Television Networks \(Regulation\) Act, 1995](#):

1. The law prescribes **imprisonment up to two years or fine up to ₹1,000 or both** for the first offence, and imprisonment up to five years and with fine up to ₹5,000 if any media governed under the CTN Act violates the provisions and the “Programme Code”.
2. The code, which contains an elaborate list of don’ts for cable TV channels, states that **no programme should be aired that contains anything obscene, defamatory, false, and suggests innuendos and half-truths**.

Insta Curious:

1. Did you know about the Indian Broadcasting Foundation (IBF)? [Read Here](#) (briefly)
2. Does IBF also cover Digital streaming platforms? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

1. About the Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995.
2. Latest amendments.
3. Composition of the Inter-Departmental Committee.

4. Functions of the committee.

Mains Link:

Discuss the need for and significance of the latest amendments.

Link: <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/news/national/rules-regulating-cable-tv-network-amended/article34842893.ece/amp/>.

12. What is hallmarking of gold, and for whom is it now mandatory?

Context:

The government has announced the phased **implementation of mandatory hallmarking of gold jewellery** with effect from June 16.

Applicability:

In the first phase, gold hallmarking will be available only in 256 districts and jewellers having annual turnover above Rs 40 lakh will come under its purview.

What is hallmarking of gold?

Hallmarking is the “**accurate determination and official recording of the proportionate content of precious metal in precious metal articles.**”

- So, it is like a “guarantee of purity or fineness” of precious metal articles.

[The Bureau of Indian Standard \(BIS\)](#) operates gold and silver hallmarking scheme in India.

Metals covered under the purview of hallmarking:

1. Gold jewellery and gold artefacts.

- Silver jewellery and silver artefacts.

Exceptions:

- Export and re-import of jewellery as per Trade Policy of Government of India — Jewellery for international exhibitions, jewellery for government-approved B2B domestic exhibitions.
- Watches, fountain pens and special types of jewellery such as Kundan, Polki and Jadau.

What was the need of making hallmarking mandatory?

- India is the biggest consumer of gold.** However, the level of hallmarked jewellery is very low in the country- only 30% of Indian gold jewellery is hallmarked. Main reason behind this is **non-availability of sufficient assaying and hallmarking centres (A&HC).**
- The mandatory hallmarking will **protect the public against lower caratage and ensure consumers do not get cheated while buying gold ornaments.**
- It will also **help to get the purity as marked on the ornaments.**
- It will **bring in transparency and assure the consumers of quality.**



Insta Curious:

Why is the gold which has come from Yanomami territory called Blood Gold? [Read here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- About Hallmarking.
- Implementing agency.
- Applicability.

- Exceptions.

- Benefits.

Mains Link:

Discuss the need for hallmarking of gold in India.

Link: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/what-is-gold-hallmarking-list-of-districts-where-it-is-mandatory-7361818/lite/>.

13. Integrated Power Development Scheme (IPDS):

Context:

A 50 kWp Solar roof top was recently inaugurated in Solan, Himachal Pradesh under [the Integrated power development scheme of the Ministry of Power](#), Government of India.

- The project further reinforces the '**Go Green**' Initiative of the government envisaged in **the Urban Distribution scheme** of the government of India.

About IPDS:

[Power Finance Corporation\(PFC\)](#) is the Nodal agency for implementation of the scheme.

Launched in 2014 by **Ministry of Power** with the objectives of:

- Strengthening of sub-transmission and distribution network in the urban areas.
- Metering of distribution transformers /feeders / consumers in the urban areas.
- IT enablement of distribution sector and strengthening of distribution network under R-APDRP.

Significance of the scheme:

The scheme will help in reduction in AT&C losses; establishment of IT enabled energy accounting / auditing system, improvement in billed energy based on metered consumption and improvement in collection efficiency.

Restructured Accelerated Power Development and Reforms Programme (R-APDRP):

Launched in July 2008 with focus on establishment of base line data, fixation of accountability, reduction of AT&C losses upto 15% level through strengthening & up-gradation of Sub Transmission and Distribution network and adoption of Information Technology during XI Plan.

Insta Curious:

1. Do you know the difference between Maharatna, Navratna and Miniratna? [Read Here](#)
2. To which category does PFC belong? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About IPDS.
2. About R-APDRP.
3. What is national grid?

4. What are AT&C losses?

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of IPDS.

14. The draft Cinematograph (Amendment) Bill 2021:

Context:

The draft was recently released by the Centre. It seeks to amend [the Cinematograph Act of 1952](#).

Key Provisions:

1. **Revision of certification:** This provision will give the Centre “revisionary powers” and enable it to “re-examine” films already cleared by [the Central Board of Film Certification \(CBFC\)](#).
2. **Age-based certification:** It seeks to introduce age-based categorisation and classification. It proposes to divide the existing categories (U, U/A and A) into further age-based groups: U/A 7+, U/A 13+ and U/A 16+.
3. **Provision against piracy:** At present, there are no enabling provisions to check film piracy. Violation shall be punishable with imprisonment and fine.
4. **Eternal certificate:** It proposes to certify films for perpetuity. Currently a certificate issued by the CBFC is valid only for 10 years.

Concerns associated:

1. **Power of the Centre to order for recertification** may lead to an additional layer of direct **government censorship** going beyond that envisaged by the existing process run by the Central Board for Film Certification (CBFC).
2. This provision also goes against the Supreme Court’s view that the government has no right to demand censorship once the Board has certified a film has left the Centre powerless.
3. **Various groups or individuals often object to a film just before the release**, but after the certification process. with the implementation of the proposed new rules, **films could be held up longer for re-certification based on random objections, even if it is already certified by the cbfc**.

What does the government say on this?

The government cites the “reasonable restrictions” placed by **the constitution in Article 19 of the constitution** to justify exercising its powers to act as a super-censor for films about which it receives complaints – even if the CBFC, which is the official body empowered to implement the Act, finds those film do not trigger those restrictions.

Insta Curious:

[Did you know that the Film Certification Appellate Tribunal \(FCAT\) has been recently dissolved?](#)

Mains Link:

Discuss the Concerns associated with the recent amendments.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About FCAT.
2. About CBFC.
3. The Cinematograph Act of 1952.
4. New amendments.

Link:<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/what-govt-proposes-to-change-in-film-certification-censor-board-7369582/lite/>

15. The Gujarat Prohibition Act, 1949:

Context:

The **Gujarat Prohibition Act, 1949** is being challenged before the Gujarat High Court, more than seven decades after it came into effect as the **Bombay Prohibition Act**.

The Gujarat Prohibition Act, 1949:

Introduced by the then **Bombay province** as **Bombay Prohibition Act, 1949** to overhaul the law relating to intoxicating drugs and narcotics total prohibition.

- It is an Act relating to the promotion and enforcement of alcohol prohibition in the Bombay State.
- The Bombay state was divided into the states of Maharashtra and Gujarat in 1960.
- Gujarat adopted **the prohibition policy in 1960** and subsequently chose to enforce it with greater rigidity.
- In 2011, it renamed the Act as **Gujarat Prohibition Act**.

Please note, the first hint at the prohibition of liquor was through the **Bombay Abkari Act, 1878**. This Act dealt with levying of duties on intoxicants, among other things and aspects of prohibition via amendments made in 1939 and 1947.

Rationale behind this law:

The state government says that it is “committed to the ideals and principles of Mahatma Gandhi and firmly intends to eradicate the menace of drinking liquor.”

How does the act rule?

- Under the Act, a permit is mandatory to purchase, possess, consume or serve liquor.
- The Act empowers the police to arrest a person for purchasing, consuming or serving alcohol without the permit with punishment ranging from three months to five years in prison.

What are the main grounds raised against prohibition of liquor and in favour of prohibition?

1. **The right of privacy is violated**, which was given voice by the Supreme Court in 2017 in **Puttaswamy judgment**. The Right is associated with the citizens' right to eat and drink as per their choice.
2. **Ground of manifest arbitrariness**: The law grants health permits and temporary permits to out-of-state tourists. The petition says there are no intelligible differences in the classes thus being created by the state on who gets to drink and who does not and violates **the Right to Equality under Article 14 of the Constitution**.

The following arguments indicate that such ban was the need of the hour:

1. The Constitution places a responsibility on all state governments to “at least contain, if not curtail, consumption of alcohol” (Article 47).
2. Strict state regulation is imperative to discourage regular and excessive consumption of alcohol.
3. Alcohol denudes family resources and reserves and leaves women and children as its most vulnerable victims. A social stigma at least as far as the family unit is concerned is still attached to the consumption of alcohol.
4. Vulnerable persons, either because of age or proclivity towards intoxication or as a feature of peer pressure, more often than not, succumb to this temptation.

Insta Curious:

Do you remember the Doctrine of Reasonable Classification? [Read Here](#) (Briefly)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Key Provisions.
2. Exceptions.
3. Punishments.

4. Other states that have banned sale of alcohol.

Mains Link:

Discuss the Concerns associated with **Gujarat Prohibition Act, 1949**.

16. Govt. unveils ₹6.28 lakh crore stimulus post 2nd COVID wave:

Context:

The government has announced some fresh relief measures for the economy, the first such package after the second COVID-19 wave.

Focus of the latest package:

Extending loan guarantees and concessional credit for pandemic-hit sectors and investments to ramp up healthcare capacities.

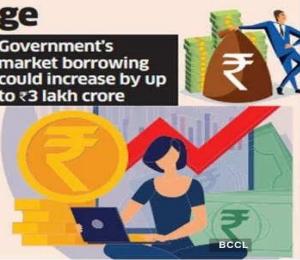
Fiscal Slippage

Fiscal impact of FM's latest announcements at less than 1% of GDP. Experts

Government's market borrowing could increase by up to ₹3 lakh crore

Direct fiscal stimulus limited, majority in credit guarantees

Fiscal deficit could increase to 7.5-7.8% of GDP over targeted 6.8%



Financial implications: ₹6,28,993 crore, representing about 3% of GDP.

Details of the measures:

1. Expansion of the existing [Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme](#) by ₹1.5 lakh crore.
2. A new ₹7,500 crore scheme for loans up to ₹1.25 lakh to small borrowers through micro-finance institutions.
3. A fresh loan guarantee facility of ₹1.1 lakh crore for healthcare investments in non-metropolitan areas and sectors such as tourism.
4. A separate ₹23,220 crore has been allocated for public health with a focus on paediatric care, which will also be utilised for increasing ICU beds, oxygen supply and augmenting medical care professionals for the short term by recruiting final year students and interns.
5. Indirect support for exports worth ₹1.21 lakh crore over the next five years.
6. Free one-month visas for five lakh tourists.
7. A new seed varieties for farmers.

Benefits/implications of these measures:

1. The measures to keep enterprises afloat in the aftermath of COVID 2.0.
2. The extension of ECLGS's scope and coverage are expected to provide significant support to the cash flow of the stressed sectors.
3. Tourism had been one of the most impacted sectors and the package would usher in much-needed liquidity and help revive the employment-intensive sector.
4. The pinpoint focus on augmenting manpower and infrastructural resources for pediatric care is a welcome step and a new beginning.

Are these measures sufficient?

Experts believe that these measures would not tackle low demand, low GDP, high inflation and unemployment.

What needs to be done?

Ours is not an export-driven economy but a consumption-driven economy. Nearly 55% of our GDP is made up of consumption. And for consumption to go up, we need to put money in the hands of the people.

- Therefore, the need of the hour is to generate new demand and for that to happen, we need to increase consumption.
- Various sectors of the economy needed "hand holding and not expansion of credit".

Need for these measures:

Various studies have shown that India's middle class had shrunk by 3.2 crore and about 7.5 crore people were pushed below the poverty line in 2020. This is largely the impact of Pandemic.

Relief measures

HEALTH

- ₹50,000 crore credit guarantee for new and ongoing projects outside metros
- Interest rate capped at 7.95%
- ₹15,000 crore for public projects to augment paediatric care, ICU beds, oxygen supply and medical personnel

BALM FOR COVID-HIT SECTORS

- Emergency Credit Line Guarantee Scheme expanded by ₹1.5 lakh crore
- ₹60,000 crore loan guarantees and concessional credit for some sectors
- 25 lakh small borrowers to get guaranteed cheap loans worth ₹7,500 crore through micro-finance firms



Insta Curious:

Do you know what Direct Monetisation of deficit is? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Overview of the measures announced.
2. About the ECLGS.
3. About the MUDRA Yojana.

Mains Link: Discuss about the significance of the measures announced.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GQH8NCU26.1&imageview=0>.

17. One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC):

Context:

The Supreme Court has directed all states and UTs to implement **the One Nation, One Ration Card system**.

What is One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC)?

The ONORC scheme is aimed at enabling migrant workers and their family members to buy subsidised ration from any fair price shop anywhere in the country under **the National Food Security Act, 2013**.

- ONORC was launched in August, 2019.
- Till date, 32 states and Union Territories have joined the ONORC, covering about 69 crore NFSA beneficiaries. **Four states are yet to join the scheme** — Assam, Chhattisgarh, Delhi and West Bengal.

Implementation:

To promote this reform in the archaic **Public Distribution System (PDS)**, the government has provided incentives to states.

The Centre had even set **the implementation of ONORC as a precondition for additional borrowing** by states during the Covid-19 pandemic last year.

- At least 17 states, which implemented the ONORC reform, were allowed to borrow an additional Rs 37,600 crores in 2020-21.

How does ONORC work?

- ONORC is based on technology that involves details of beneficiaries' ration card, Aadhaar number, and electronic Points of Sale (ePoS).
- The system identifies a beneficiary through biometric authentication on ePos devices at fair price shops.
- The system runs with the support of two portals —**Integrated Management of Public Distribution System (IM-PDS) and Annavitran**, which host all the relevant data.

National Food Security Act, 2013:

The National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA 2013) converts into legal entitlements for existing food security programmes of the Government of India.

- It includes **the Midday Meal Scheme, Integrated Child Development Services scheme and the Public Distribution System**.
- It **recognizes maternity entitlements**.

Insta Curious:

Do you recollect Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav? [Read Here](#)

4. Maternity benefits related provisions.

5. Overview of Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme.
6. Overview of Mid-Day Meal (MDM) scheme.
7. The responsibility of 3. Identification of Households under the scheme.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About TPDS.
2. Who gets food security allowance under the scheme?
3. Provisions of penalty under the act.

Mains Link: Discuss the significance National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013.

Link: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/one-nation-one-ration-card-benefits-implementation-supreme-court-modi-govt-7381857/lite/>.

18. Govt. gives nod for Cipla to import Moderna's vaccine:

Context:

The **Drugs Controller General of India (DCGI)** has granted permission to Mumbai-based pharma major Cipla to import Moderna's COVID-19 vaccine, making it **the fourth vaccine in the country to be given the emergency use authorisation (EUA)**.

- Currently, India has made available three COVID vaccines — Covaxin, Covishield and Sputnik.

About the Vaccine:

The vaccine, mRNA-1273, manufactured by Moderna TX, Inc., is a two-dose vaccine with the shots to be given 28 days apart.

Messenger RNA vaccines, also called mRNA vaccines, are a new vaccine technology platform.

- The mRNA vaccines teach human cells how to make a protein, or even just a piece of a protein of the virus, triggering an immune response inside human bodies.
- The benefit of mRNA vaccines, like all vaccines, is that those vaccinated gain protection without ever having to risk the serious consequences of getting sick with Covid-19.

Regular procedure for drug approval:

Vaccines and medicines, and even diagnostic tests and medical devices, require **the approval of a regulatory authority before they can be administered**.

- In India, the regulatory authority is **the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)**.
- For vaccines and medicines, **approval is granted after an assessment of their safety and effectiveness, based on data from trials**.

When can emergency use authorisation (EUA) be granted?

India does not have a term like the EUA as in the US or UK in its regulatory processes. But in **the New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019**, there are provisions for pharmaceutical companies to get approvals for clinical trials for new drugs or vaccines in India.

- When **there is a declared emergency**, the regulator, in India's case the DCGI, can take a call whether it is worth releasing a drug or vaccine that is not fully tested for efficacy and safety.
- If there is evidence to suggest it may benefit patients, then the regulator is well within its rights to issue an emergency use authorisation to a medical product to make it widely available for use.

Is there a risk in using a product that has only been granted an EUA?

According to the US FDA, the public has to be informed that a product has only been granted an EUA and not full approval.

- In the case of a Covid-19 vaccine, for example, people have to be informed about the known and potential benefits and risks, and the "extent to which such benefits or risks are unknown", and that they have a right to refuse the vaccine.

Insta Curious:

Do you know the different types of COVID -19 vaccines and different approaches to designing a vaccine? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is vaccine nationalism?
2. Which drugs are being used in the treatment of COVID 19 disease?

3. Various tests to detect SARS- COV 2.
4. What is mRNA?

Mains Link: What is Vaccine Nationalism? What are the concerns associated? Discuss.

Link: <https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GE68NG66I.1&imageview=0>.

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

1. Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007:

Context:

The High Court of Karnataka has said that **there is a complete failure on the part of the State government to comply with its statutory obligation of establishing old-age homes** as per the provisions of [the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007](#).

Is it mandatory for the state to set up such homes as per the law?

Section 19 of the law says, the State Government **may establish** and maintain such number of oldage homes at accessible places, as it may deem necessary, in a phased manner, **beginning with at least one in each district** .

- The State Government may also, **prescribe a scheme for management of oldage homes.**

What has the High Court said on this?

Though the Act states that the State governments “**may**” establish and maintain old-age homes, the Court said that depending upon various factors, while interpreting a statute, the word “**may**” can be interpreted as “**shall**” and vice versa.

Need for such homes:

Indigent senior citizens need protection considering the harsh reality of life, in which a large number of elderly persons are not being looked after by their families due to withering of the joint family system. Besides, ageing has become a **major social challenge**.

Overview of the Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007:

- This Act makes it legally obliging for adult children and heirs to provide for parents by way of a monthly allowance.
- This Act provides an inexpensive and speedy procedure to claim monthly maintenance for parents and senior citizens.
- According to this Act, parents could mean biological, adoptive or step-parents.
- Under this Act, there are also provisions to protect the life and property of such persons (elderly).

Insta Curious:

1. Do you know, the UN 2020 theme observes 2020-2030 as the Decade of Healthy ageing?

[Read Here](#)

2. Do you know , Surprisingly, older persons are not yet expressly identified as a protected group under international human rights law? [Read More](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Who are Indigent senior citizens as per the act?
2. Role of states as per the act.
3. Other key features of the Act.
4. Amendments proposed.

Mains Link:

Ageing has become a major social challenge.
Comment.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GRK8KP62F.1&imageview=0>

2. Caste categories for NREGS pay:

Context:

The Union Finance Ministry has asked the States **to split wage payments under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) scheme** into separate **categories for the Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes and others** from this financial year.

- Please note, the existing system for wages under the scheme is for only one type, that is there is no category wise provision of wage payment.

Rationale behind this move:

This is being done in order to **assess and highlight the benefits flowing from budgetary outlay towards Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.**

- The measure is to a large extent aimed at highlighting what the Centre is doing for the SC and ST communities.

What are the Concerns against this move?

1. This may complicate the payment system.
2. It may lead to a reduction in scheme funding.
3. It may cause delay in wage payments.
4. This may also restrict MGNREGA to districts with high SC/ST populations.

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:

1. Do you know what WAGE RIFT is? [Read Here](#) (Related topic to Wages)
2. Did you know that Gram Panchayats are responsible for Issuing Job Cards (JCs) under the Scheme? Read more about the roles of Gram Panchayat [here](#):

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=GDF8KRVMC.1&imageview=0>

3. Kerala's Smart Kitchen project:

Context:

The Kerala government has announced the introduction of a **Smart Kitchen project**, which is meant to modernise kitchens and ease the difficulty faced by homemakers in household chores.

About the scheme:

- To be implemented through the Kerala State Financial Enterprises (KSFE), a state-run chit fund and lending firm.
- Under the scheme, KSFE would give **soft loans to women from all walks of life for purchasing household gadgets or equipment.**
- The interest of the loan/cost would be equally shared among the beneficiary, local self-government body and the state government.

Need for/significance of the scheme;

Gender budgeting: The government believes that for better participation of women in labour, the burden on household chores has to be reduced.

Increase women participation: By enhancing mechanisation in kitchens, women participation in labour could be increased.

Insta Curious:

Terminology related to Women Participation and Economy:

Do you know the difference between Glass Cliff and Glass Ceiling? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Key features and significance of the scheme.

Link:<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-what-is-keralas-smart-kitchen-project-7345625/>.

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

1. January 30 now 'World Neglected Tropical Diseases Day':

Context:

Delegates at the 74th [World Health Assembly](#) unanimously adopted a proposal by the United Arab Emirates to declare January 30 as 'World Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD) Day'.

What are Neglected Tropical Diseases?

- They are **infections that are most common among marginalised communities** in the developing regions of Africa, Asia and the Americas.
- **Caused by** a variety of pathogens such as viruses, bacteria, protozoa and parasitic worms.
- They **generally receive less funding for research and treatment** than malaises like tuberculosis, HIV-AIDS and malaria.
- **Some examples** include snakebite envenomation, scabies, yaws, trachoma, Leishmaniasis and Chagas disease.

The WHO's new road map for 2021–2030 calls for three strategic shifts to end NTDs:

1. From measuring process to measuring impact.
2. From disease-specific planning and programming to collaborative work across sectors.
3. From externally driven agendas reliant to programmes that are country-owned and country-financed.

Why was January 30 chosen?

It was on this day that the **London Declaration on NTDs** was adopted, January 30, 2012.

- The first World NTD Day was celebrated informally in 2020.

Why do NTDs need special attention?

NTDs affect more than a billion people globally. They are preventable and treatable. However, these diseases — and their intricate interrelationships with poverty and ecological systems — continue to cause devastating health, social and economic consequences.

Spread:

Infections are caused by unsafe water, poor housing conditions and poor sanitation.

Children are the most vulnerable to these diseases, which kill, impair or permanently disable millions of people every year, often resulting in life-long physical pain and social stigmatization.

Policies on neglected diseases research in India:

The National Health Policy (2017) sets an ambition to stimulate innovation to meet health needs and ensure that new drugs are affordable for those who need them most, but it does not specifically tackle neglected diseases.

The National Policy on Treatment of Rare Diseases

(2018) includes infectious tropical diseases and identifies a need to support research on treatments for rare diseases. It has not yet prioritised diseases and areas for research funding or how innovation would be supported.

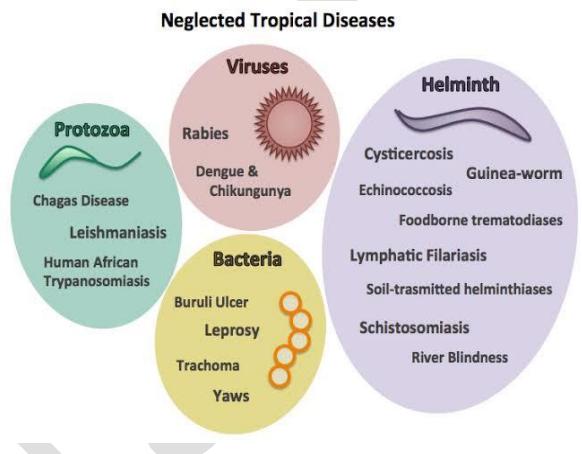
Insta Curious:

Do you know about Chagas disease? [Learn more about it](#):

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- About the World Health Assembly-composition and functions.
- Examples of NTDs.
- Why was January 30 chosen as the World NTD?



Mains Link:

Write a note on NTDs.

Link:

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/health/january-30-now-world-neglected-tropical-diseases-day-wha-77157>.

2. H10N3 bird flu strain:

Context:

China has reported the world's first human infection of the H10N3 bird flu strain.

About H10N3 bird flu:

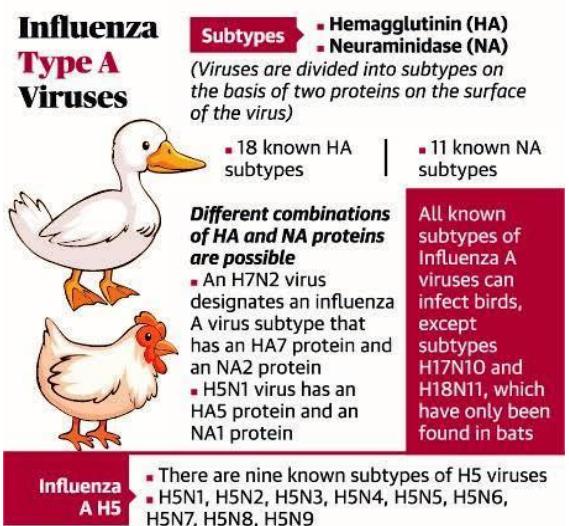
H10N3 is a type of [bird flu or avian flu](#). These illnesses are common in wild aquatic birds worldwide and can infect domestic poultry and other bird and animal species.

Spread and transmission:

Infected birds shed avian flu in their saliva, mucus, and poop, and humans can get infected when enough of the virus gets in the eyes, nose, or mouth, or is inhaled from infected droplets or dust.

Is it a cause for concern?

Health authorities have played down the outbreak, saying the case was a sporadic virus transmission from poultry to



humans, and the risk of causing a pandemic was extremely low.

- H10N3 is a low pathogenic or relatively less severe strain of the virus in poultry and the risk of it spreading on a large scale is very low.

How to prevent the spread of H10N3 among people?

1. People should avoid contact with sick or dead poultry and avoid direct contact with live birds as much as possible.
2. People must pay attention to food hygiene at the moment.
3. People should wear masks and improve self-protection awareness, while constantly monitoring fever and respiratory symptoms.

Different strains of bird flu:

Several strains of bird flu have been found among animals in China but mass outbreaks in humans are rare.

1. The **last human epidemic of bird flu** in China occurred in late 2016 to 2017, with the **H7N9 virus**.
2. **H5N8** is a subtype of the Influenza A virus (also known as the bird flu virus). While H5N8 only presents a low risk to humans, it is highly lethal to wild birds and poultry.
3. In April, a highly pathogenic **H5N6** avian flu was found in wild birds in northeast China's Shenyang city.

Classification:

Influenza viruses are classified into subtypes based on two surface proteins, **Hemagglutinin (HA)** and **Neuraminidase (NA)**. For example, a virus that has an HA 7 protein and NA 9 protein is designated as subtype H7N9.

Insta Curious:

1. Did you know India has been declared free of Avian Influenza (H5N1) in 2019? [Read here](#):
2. Do you know the highly virulent and contagious form of Bird flu is called Fowl plague? [Read here](#)
3. Know about **Influenza pandemic of 1918–19/ Spanish flu** :[READ HERE](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. When a country is declared free from Avian Influenza, who declares it?
2. H5N1 vs H5N6 vs H9N2 vs H5N8.
3. About H10N3.

Mains Link:

Write a note on Bird Flu. Discuss how it can be prevented.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GRK8KP5H3.1&imageview=0>.

3. Only Delta is a variant of concern: WHO:

Context:

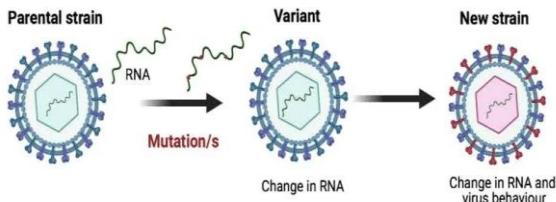
The [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) has said only B.1.617.2, one of the three strains of the B.1.617 COVID-19 variant first detected in India, is a “**variant of concern**” now.

Background:

The [B.1.617](#) variant was first detected in India and was divided in three lineages — B.1.617.1, B.1.617.2 and B.1.617.3.

How do variants of a virus emerge and why?

1. Variants of a virus have one or more mutations that differentiate it from the other variants that are in circulation.
2. Essentially, the goal of the virus is to reach a stage where it can cohabit with humans because it needs a host to survive.
3. 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.



What is a mutation?

- A mutation means a **change in the genetic sequence of the virus**.
- In the case of **SARS-CoV-2**, which is an **Ribonucleic acid (RNA) virus**, a mutation means a change in the sequence in which its molecules are arranged.
- A **mutation in an RNA virus often happens when the virus makes a mistake while it is making copies of itself**.

Insta Curious:

1. How are viruses named? [Read here](#),
2. [DNA vs. RNA- how many differences do you know?](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is Covid 19?
2. What is mutation?
3. What is mRNA?
4. What is RT- PCR test?
5. What is genome sequencing?

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

ABOUT MUTATIONS AND VARIANTS

Mutations occur when something changes, is added or deleted from the virus' proteins.

A variant is created by a **combination of mutations** – often between five and 15 mutations.

A variant becomes "of concern" (VOC) if it fulfils at least one of these criteria:

- 1 There is evidence that it **transmits more easily**
- 2 Causes **more severe illness**
- 3 Significantly **reduces neutralisation** by antibodies, or **reduces the effectiveness** of treatment, vaccines or diagnosis.

A variant is "of interest" if it might fulfil any of the criteria of a VOC, but there is insufficient evidence to declare it a VOC.

VARIANTS OF CONCERN		
UK B117	South Africa B1351	Brazil P1
Key changes		
Other changes		
Earliest samples	September 2020	August 2020
First detected	United Kingdom	South Africa
Concerns		
- Increased infectivity	✓	✓
- Increased severity	✗ Possible	✗ Possible but not confirmed
- Reduction of vaccine effectiveness	✗	✗ Possible
Number of locations now detected in	142	97
		56

VARIANTS OF INTEREST	
India B16171	India B16172
Key changes	
Other changes	
Earliest samples	October 2020
First detected	India
Concerns	
- Increased infectivity	
- Increased severity	
- Reduction of vaccine effectiveness	✗ Possible but not confirmed
Number of locations now detected in*	At least 17

NOTE: *Accurate as at latest update by WHO on May 4.

Sources: SEBASTIAN MAURER-STROH, LOUIS DEFALCO, BII/GIS A*STAR AND GISAID

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GDF8KRVK5.1&imageview=0>

4. What is Delta Plus, a variant of coronavirus with K417N mutation?

Context:

The Health Ministry has categorised Delta Plus variant of coronavirus as a '**variant of concern**'. It has been detected in many states.

What is a 'variant of concern'?

It is one for which there is evidence of:

1. An increase in transmissibility.
2. More severe diseases that require hospitalisation or death.
3. A significant reduction in neutralisation by antibodies generated during previous infection or vaccination.

- Reduced effectiveness of treatments or vaccines, or diagnostic detection failures.
- In the case of the Delta Plus variant**, the Health Ministry identified three characteristics — increased transmissibility; stronger binding in receptors of lung cells; and potential reduction in monoclonal antibody response.

Variants of Concern so far:

'Variants of concern' include **B.1.1.7 or Alpha first identified in the UK**, **B.1.351 or Beta first identified in South Africa**, and **B.1.427 or Epsilon first identified in the US**.

Earlier, the World Health Organisation (WHO) had identified **the Delta variant or B.1.617.2**, first found in India, as a 'variant of concern'.

How can a variant of concern be controlled?

- They require appropriate health actions like increased testing or "research to determine the effectiveness of vaccines and treatments against the variant".
- Based on the characteristics of the variant, additional considerations may include the development of new diagnostics or the modification of vaccines or treatments.

Insta Curious:

[Do you know Variants of Interest and Variants of High Consequence?](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- What is Covid 19?
- What is mutation?
- What is mRNA?
- What is the RT- PCR test?

- What is genome sequencing?

- What is a variant of concern?

Mains Link:

Discuss the concerns associated with mutations of Covid- 19 virus.

5. What is the SDG India Index?

About the Index for [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#):

- First launched in December 2018, the index has become the primary tool for monitoring progress on the SDGs in India.
- It has also fostered competition among the states and UTs by ranking them on the global goals.
- The index is developed in collaboration with **the United Nations in India**.
- It tracks the progress of all states and UTs on 115 indicators aligned with **the National Indicator Framework (NIF)** of the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.

How are states and UTs ranked?

The SDG India Index scores range between 0–100, higher the score of a State/UT, the greater the distance to target achieved.

States and UTs are classified in four categories based on Index score:

- Aspirant: 0–49.
- Performer: 50–64.
- Front-runner: 65–99.
- Achiever: 100.

Currently, there are no states in the aspirant and achiever category.



What are its latest findings?

- Country's overall SDG score improved by 6 points — from 60 in 2019 to 66 in 2020-21.**
- This improvement is on accounts of improvement in performance in providing facilities including clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy among others.
- Kerala retained its rank as the top with a score of 75, Himachal Pradesh and Tamil Nadu both took the second spot with a score of 74.**
- Bihar, Jharkhand and Assam were the worst performing states in this year's India index.**
- Chandigarh maintained its top spot among the UTs with a score of 79, followed by Delhi (68).**

Insta Curious:

Did you know- the Millennium Development Goals were aimed at poorer countries (more or less) and SDG goals are designed to be universal. [Read here,](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- SDGs vs MDGs- similarities, differences and time period.
- Adoption and administration of these goals.
- United Nations Conference on the Human Environment vs Earth Summit.
- Addis Ababa Action.
- Goals related to poverty and environment.

Link: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/niti-aayog-sustainable-development-goals-ranks-explained-7343640/lite/>.

6. Education index ranking:

Context:

The Ministry of Education has released the [Performance Grading Index](#) for 2019-20.

About the Performance Grading Index:

- PGI is a tool to grade all States and UTs on their performance across 70 indicators on school education.
- First published in 2019 with reference year 2017-18.
- The Indicators have been grouped into 2 Categories – **Outcomes and Governance &**



- Intended nationally determined contributions (INDC).
- What is SDG India Index?

Mains Link:

Enumerate the principal goals and targets of Sustainable Development Goals.

HOW THE REGION FARED

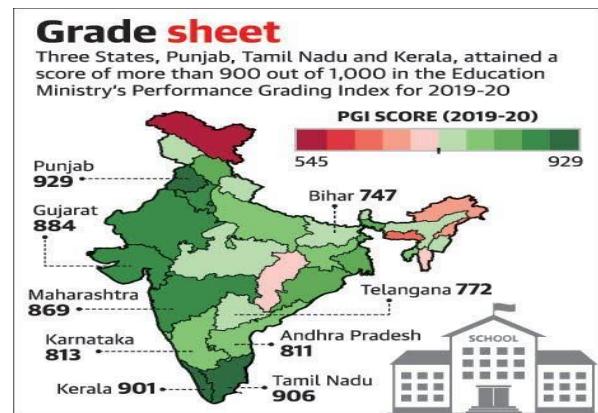
The states and UTs were scored on 70 parameters under five main heads

State (Rank)	Learning outcomes, quality (180)	Access (80)	Infra and facilities (150)	Equity (230)	Governance processes (360)	Total (1000)
Punjab (1)	126	79	150	228	346	929
Delhi (6)	124	77	149	224	324	898
Haryana (11)	134	75	131	217	305	862
HP (13)	140	77	131	220	271	839
J&K (26)	132	55	114	208	254	763

- Management** with 4 Domains under the first category and 1 under the second.
4. **Objective:** To encourage States & UTs to adopt best practices like online recruitment and transfer of teachers, electronic attendance of students & teachers.
 5. **Significance:** Grading system assists the States & UTs to identify gaps and design appropriate interventions to bridge them.

Latest findings:

1. Punjab, Chandigarh, Tamil Nadu, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Kerala occupy the highest grade **A++ in 2019-20.**
2. Delhi, Gujarat, Haryana, Rajasthan, Puducherry, Dadra and Nagar Haveli are in the **A+ category.**
3. **Punjab has scored the maximum points for governance and management.**
4. **Bihar and Meghalaya have scored the lowest in terms of infrastructure and facilities.**



Insta Curious:

Do you know about the EFA(Education For All) Development Index? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About PGI.
2. Released by?
3. Indicators used for ranking.
4. Performance of states and UTs in the latest index.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of the index.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G9R8L7HHU.1&imageview=0>.

7. More antibodies produced by Covishield than Covaxin: study:

Context:

A study was conducted recently to study the real-world effectiveness of [vaccination](#) in India. It was conducted on healthcare workers (HCW).

- For the study, 515 healthcare workers from 13 States and covering 22 cities were evaluated from January to May 2021.

Key findings:

1. Covishield vaccine produced more antibodies than Covaxin.
2. Seropositivity rates to anti-spike antibodies were significantly higher in Covishield recipients compared to Covaxin after the first dose.
3. Responder rate and median (IQR) rise in anti-spike antibody were significantly higher in Covishield vs. Covaxin recipient.

What are vaccines?

Vaccines train our immune system to fight a disease-causing agent, which has not yet affected a person. They prepare the body for future protection.

How do they work?

- Vaccines are known to have a component called antigen, which is usually a part of the pathogen against which the vaccine is being developed.
- The role of antigen, once inside the human body, is to activate the immune system in order to develop protective antibodies, without having any ability to cause the full-fledged disease.
- This way, once a person is fully vaccinated, he or she develops antibodies and remains protected.

Covishield vs Covaxin:

1. Covishield (the vaccine by Oxford University-AstraZeneca) is based on **the viral-vectored platform**.
2. Covaxin (jointly developed by Bharat Biotech and the Indian Council of Medical Research), is **an inactivated vaccine**.

What are Viral-vectored vaccines?

A vector, in infectious disease biology, is what works as **a vehicle to transport a disease-causing agent**.

- For example, mosquitoes are the vector of malaria, a disease caused by a parasite called plasmodium.

In **viral-vectored vaccines**, a virus is used to carry the target antigen gene into human cells.

- There are many such viral vectors, which have different advantages. The most widely known are **the adenovirus vectors**, which cause very mild colds or asymptomatic infections in humans.
- **Covishield uses a chimpanzee adenovirus** (AZD1222 or ChAdOx1), which carries the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein.
- The chimpanzee adenovirus has been used because humans will not have pre-existing antibodies to this adenovirus.

What are Inactivated or killed vaccines?

Pathogens (viruses or bacteria) that cannot multiply cannot cause disease. So **inactivating a virus or bacteria, using chemicals like formalin, can convert them into a safe immunogen**.

- Because inactivated viruses or bacteria do not multiply, we may need to use multiple doses of the vaccine and also give another substance to improve the immune response — this is called **an adjuvant**. The most common adjuvant is the alum but shark oil suspensions and a few others are also used.

A number of vaccines developed in China, and Covaxin in India are on **the inactivated platform**.

Insta Curious:

Did you know what RNA Vaccines, Subunit vaccines, Live-attenuated vaccines etc are?

[Read more](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What are antibodies?
2. What are antigens?
3. What are Vaccines? How do they work?
4. Types of Vaccines.
5. What is mRNA?

Mains Link:

Write a note on Vaccine wastage.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GCS8L6PN6.1&imageview=0>

8. QS World University Rankings 2022:

Context:

Leading global higher education analysts **QS (Quacquarelli Symonds)** has released the **18th edition of one of the most-consulted international university rankings**.

- It is **the only international ranking to have received the approval of International Ranking Expert Group (IREG)**.

Top 3 in the world:

1. The Massachusetts Institute of Technology achieved a record-extending 10th consecutive year as world number-one.
2. The University of Oxford has risen to second for the first time since 2006.
3. The Stanford University and the University of Cambridge share third spot.

Performance of Indian Institutes:

Top varsities | JNU, featuring for the first time in the QS World Universities Ranking list, is among the top-600 in the world
= indicates shared ranking

2022 global rank	Name
177=	Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay
185	Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi
186=	Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru
255=	Indian Institute of Technology, Madras
277=	Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur
280	Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur
395=	Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati
400=	Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee
501-510 (ranking band)	University of Delhi
561-570 (ranking band)	Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi

1. Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay and IIT Delhi remained **the three universities from India to rank in the top-200 positions**.
2. **The Jawaharlal Nehru University** has made its debut in the QS World University Rankings and is placed in the 561-570 band.
3. Seventeen of India's 35 universities have seen a rise in their CPF score, against only 12 drops in CPF.
4. **Challenges:** However, Indian universities continue to struggle in QS's measure of institutional teaching capacity. Twenty-three of India's 35 universities have suffered declines in QS's faculty/student ratio indicator, with only six recording improvements.
5. **No Indian university ranks among the top 250 in the faculty/student ratio category.**

How are institutions ranked?

QS uses six indicators to compile the ranking: Academic reputation (AR), employer reputation (ER), citations per faculty (CPF), faculty/student ratio, international faculty ratio and international student ratio.

Insta Curious:

Can you recall the parameters considered by The National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) to rank institutions across the country. [CHECK HERE](#)

3. Top 3 institutions worldwide.
4. Name the 6 indicators used to rank institutions.

Mains Link:

Write a note on institutions of Eminence scheme.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GRG8LDQA4.1&imageview=0>.

9. Vaccine nationalism:

Context:

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) president-elect and Maldivian Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid has warned against **Vaccine nationalism** and said that it would destroy countries' efforts to eradicate the pandemic and must be avoided "at all costs".

- He termed the disparity in vaccination coverage in developed countries and the rest of the world "unacceptable".

What is vaccine nationalism?

- Vaccine nationalism occurs when a country manages to secure doses of vaccine for its own citizens or residents before they are made available in other countries.
- This is done through pre-purchase agreements between a government and a vaccine manufacturer.

How was it used in the past?

Vaccine nationalism is not new. During the early stages of **the 2009 H1N1 flu pandemic**, some of the wealthiest countries entered into pre-purchase agreements with several pharmaceutical companies working on H1N1 vaccines.

- At that time, it was estimated that, in the best-case scenario, the maximum number of vaccine doses that could be produced globally was two billion.
- **The US alone negotiated and obtained the right to buy 600,000 doses.** All the countries that negotiated pre-purchase orders were developed economies.

Why is it not good? What are the associated concerns?

1. Vaccine nationalism is harmful for equitable access to vaccines.
2. It further disadvantages countries with fewer resources and bargaining power.
3. It deprives populations in the Global South from timely access to vital public health goods.
4. Taken to its extreme, it allocates vaccines to moderately at-risk populations in wealthy countries over populations at higher risk in developing economies.

What needs to be done?

Equity entails both, affordability of vaccines and access opportunities for populations across the world, irrespective of geography and geopolitics.

International institutions — including the WHO — should **coordinate negotiations** ahead of the next pandemic to produce a framework for equitable access to vaccines during public health crises.

What is the way out?

Vaccine Diplomacy: Vaccine diplomacy is the branch of global health diplomacy in which a nation uses the development or delivery of vaccines to strengthen ties with other nations.

India's vaccine diplomacy:

- India had earlier supplied hydroxychloroquine, Remdesivir and paracetamol tablets, as well as diagnostic kits, ventilators, masks, gloves and other medical supplies to a large number of countries to help them deal with the pandemic.
- India has also carried out capacity building and training workshops for neighbouring countries.

However, the Centre had imposed in April this year, some restrictions on exports, potentially undoing the goodwill earned earlier by free supply of vaccines to friendly developing countries and by its substantial contribution to the international COVAX programme to supply vaccines to lower-income countries.

InstaLinks:

1. Do you know the difference between Passive immunization and Active immunization? [Read Here](#)
2. Have you heard about Herd Immunity? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is vaccine nationalism?
2. Which drugs are being used in the treatment of COVID 19 disease?
3. Various tests to detect SARS- COV 2.
4. What is H1N1?

Mains Link:

What is Vaccine Nationalism? What are the concerns associated? Discuss.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G9J8LGOC9.1&imageview=0>

10. WHO Global Tuberculosis Programme:

Context:

A virtual high-level event on 'Global Drive to Scale up TB Prevention' was recently organized by [**WHO Global Tuberculosis Programme**](#).

- The purpose of this special high-level event was to discuss key actions needed at the global and country-level to scale up TB prevention strategies and drive progress towards achieving **the 2022 UN High-Level Meeting target on TB preventive treatment**.

What is TB?

1. TB is an infectious disease caused by the bacillus **Mycobacterium tuberculosis**.
2. It typically affects the lungs (pulmonary TB) but can also affect other sites.
3. The disease is spread when people who are sick with pulmonary TB expel bacteria into the air, for example by coughing.

India's efforts in this regard:

1. India is aggressively implementing its fully-funded [**National Strategic Plan to End TB**](#).
2. In the last few years, 50 million people have been treated.
3. India seeks to achieve national scale-up of **TB preventive treatment (TPT)**.
4. It also seeks to achieve **the UN High-Level Meeting (UNHLM) targets** of 40 million persons started on TB treatment and 30 million on TPT globally in the remaining 18 months.
5. **Sub-national Certification of States and Districts instituted in 2020-** The initiative marks districts/States-UTs on "Progress towards TB Free Status" under different categories measured with graded milestones of decline in TB incidence.

India's Annual TB Report 2020:

1. 20.04 lakh notified TB patients in 2019 in India, which is a **14% increase from 2018**.
2. **Reduction in the number of missing cases** to 2.9 lakh cases as against more than 10 lakhs in 2017.
3. **Private sector notifications increased** by 35% with 6.78 lakh TB patients notified.
4. **Proportion of children diagnosed with TB increased** to 8% in 2019 compared to 6% in 2018.
5. **Provision of HIV testing for all notified TB patients increased** from 67% in 2018 to 81% in 2019.
6. Expansion of treatment services has resulted in a **12% improvement in the treatment success rate of notified patients**. For 2019, it is 81% compared to 69% in 2018.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about NI-KSHAY? [Read Here](#)

Do you know about 'Find.Treat. All. #EndTB'? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. SDG on TB reduction.
2. What is NTEP and the goal under it?

3. About the Central TB Division.

4. Annual TB report is released by?
5. What is TB? How is it caused?

Mains Link:

"India's TB report must be seen in light of the country's slide in Hunger Index", critically analyse the statement in the light of recently released Annual India Tuberculosis (TB) report.

11. Ebola Outbreak:

Context:

An Ebola outbreak in Guinea that started in February, infecting 16 people and killing 12, has been declared over by [WHO](#).

Background:

The Ebola outbreak in 2014-2016 killed 11,300 people, mostly in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

- In May 2021, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) officially declared the end of the 12th Ebola outbreak.

About Ebola:

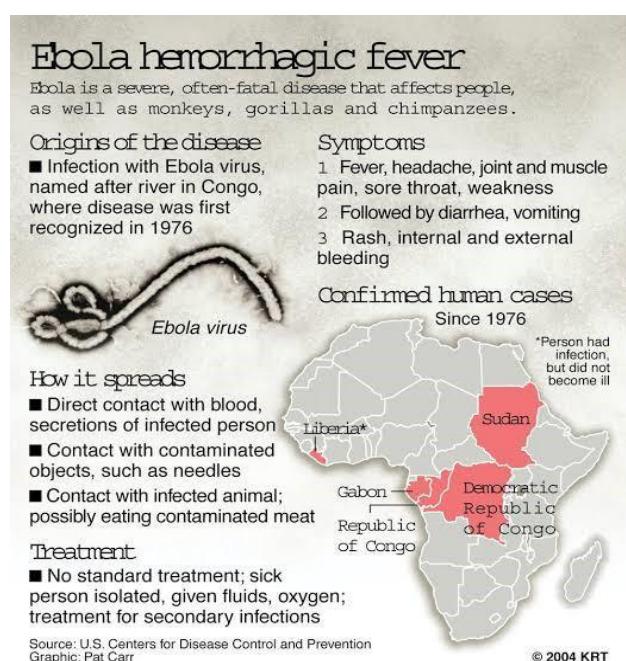
Ebola virus disease (EVD), formerly known as **Ebola haemorrhagic fever**, is a severe, often fatal illness in humans.

Transmission: The virus is transmitted to people from wild animals and spreads in the human population through human-to-human transmission.

The average EVD case fatality rate is around 50%. Case fatality rates have varied from 25% to 90% in past outbreaks.

Prevention: Community engagement is key to successfully controlling outbreaks. Good outbreak control relies on case management, surveillance and contact tracing, a good laboratory service and social mobilisation.

Treatment: Early supportive care with rehydration, symptomatic treatment improves survival. There is yet no licensed treatment proven to neutralise the virus but a range of blood, immunological and drug therapies are under development.



Insta Curious:

[Do you know what exactly is Public Health Emergency of International Concern? How many PHEIC declarations have been made so far?](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. How is Ebola spread?
2. What are zoonotic diseases?
3. Differences between virus, bacteria and other pathogens.
4. Where is Congo?

5. Regions in Africa where Ebola outbreak was observed?

Mains Link:

Discuss how the Ebola pandemic was handled by Congo Republic.

12. NISHTHA: Teachers' Training Programme:

Context:

Ministry of Tribal Affairs and NCERT come together on a joint mission for NISHTHA Capacity Building Programme for [Eklavya Model Residential Schools \(EMRSs\)](#) Teachers and Principals.

What is NISHTHA?

National Initiative for School Heads and Teachers Holistic Advancement (NISHTHA) is a national mission **to improve learning outcomes at the elementary level**. This is done **through integrated teacher training**.

- It is the largest teachers' training programme of its kind in the world.
- It has been launched under the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of [Samagra Shiksha](#) in 2109-20.

Objective:

To motivate and equip teachers to encourage and foster critical thinking in students and also teachers will get awareness and develop their skills on various aspects.

Implementation:

Training will be conducted directly by 33120 Key Resource Persons (KRPs) and State Resource Persons (SRP) identified by the State and UTs, who will in turn be trained by 120 National Resource Persons identified from National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA).

Expected outcomes:

1. Improvement in learning outcomes of the students.
2. Creation of an enabling and enriching inclusive classroom environment.
3. Teachers are trained as first level counselors to be alert and responsive to the social, emotional and psychological need of students.
4. Teachers are trained to use Art as pedagogy leading to increased creativity and innovation among students.
5. Teachers are trained to develop and strengthen personal-social qualities of students for their holistic development
6. Creation of healthy and safe school environment.
7. Integration of ICT in teaching-learning and assessment.
8. Develop stress-free School Based Assessment focused on development of learning competencies.
9. Teachers adopt Activity Based Learning and move away from rote learning to competency based learning.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about the Incheon Declaration? [Read Here](#)

Prelims Link:

1. About Samagra Shiksha Program.
2. About NISHTHA.
3. About EMRSs.

InstaLinks:

13. Suicide worldwide in 2019:

Context:

Suicide worldwide in 2019 report was recently released by WHO.

Key findings:

1. The world will not be able to reach the SDG target- **Reducing the global suicide mortality rate by a third.**
2. 703,000 people or one in a 100, died by suicide in 2019.
3. **Most affected age group:** More than half of global suicides (58 per cent) occurred before the age of 50 years. Suicide was the fourth-leading cause of death among young people aged 15-29 globally in 2019.
4. **Most affected regions:** Some 77 per cent of global suicides in 2019 occurred in low- and middle-income countries. On an average, 9 out of every 100,000 people ended their lives in the world.
5. **Higher than the global average:** Three [WHO](#) regions — Africa, Europe and South-East Asia — recorded suicide rates higher than the global average.
6. **Overall decrease in suicide rate:** In 20 years (2000-2019), the global suicide rate had decreased by 36 per cent.
7. Currently, **only 38 countries are known to have a national suicide prevention strategy.**

WHO guidelines to help countries reduce the global suicide mortality rate by a third by 2030:

1. Limiting access to the means of suicide, such as highly hazardous pesticides and firearms.
2. Educating the media on responsible reporting of suicide.
3. Fostering socio-emotional life skills in adolescents.
4. Early identification, assessment, management and follow-up of anyone affected by suicidal thoughts and behaviour.

[**SDG Goals in this regard- Goal 3:**](#)

1. **Target 3.4:** By 2030, By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well being.
2. **Target 3.5:** Strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse, including narcotic drug abuse and harmful use of alcohol.
3. **Target 3.8:** Achieve universal health coverage, which mental health is part of.

Suicide rate in India:

- As of 2019, **India has the highest suicide rate in the South-East Asian region-** 16.5 suicides per 100,000 people.
- India also had the third-highest female suicide rate (14.7).

Measures by India in this regard:

1. **The Mental Healthcare Act, 2017** decriminalizes suicide, assuring adequate medical relief to those attempting it.
2. **The National Mental Health Programme and Health and Wellness Centres** under the Ayushman Bharat Program are efforts to provide quality care at the primary health care level.
3. **Deaddiction centres and rehabilitation services** are also available.
4. A comprehensive suicide prevention strategy within the framework of **the National Mental Health Policy of India 2014**, with effective multisectoral collaboration is imperative.

Insta Curious:

Extrapolated topic

1. Do you know the difference between Voluntary, Non-Voluntary and Involuntary Euthanasia? [Read Here](#)
2. What is the view of Buddhism on Suicide and Euthanasia? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About the National Mental Health Policy.

2. Mental Healthcare Act, 2017.

3. National Mental Health Programme.

Mains Link:

Discuss the measures taken by India to prevent suicides in the country.

14. Possible antibodies against Nipah virus detected in bats from Mahabaleshwar cave:

Context:

A survey by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) and the National Institute of Virology has picked up samples with the possible presence of antibodies against the Nipah virus in some bat species from a cave in Mahabaleshwar, a popular hill station in Maharashtra.

- The survey was aimed at studying the prevalence of the [Nipah virus \(NiV\)](#) – one of the top-10 global priority list pathogens identified by the World Health Organization (WHO) – in bats of India.

Nipah Virus outbreaks in India:

1. India has experienced four NiV outbreaks, with the case fatality rate between 65 percent and 100 percent.
2. The most recent outbreak started in Kerala in 2018.
3. Southern Asian countries and some Indian states have been identified as potential hotspots for the disease.

What's the Concern now?

Nipah is considered dangerous as there is no medicine or vaccines and the death rate among those affected is high. While the Case Fatality Rate (CFR) among COVID-19 affected patients is between 1-2%, that for Nipah infections is in the range of 65-100%.

About the Nipah virus:

1. It is a **zoonotic virus**, meaning that it can spread between animals and people.
2. The organism which causes Nipah Virus encephalitis is an **RNA or Ribonucleic acid virus of the family Paramyxoviridae, genus Henipavirus**, and is closely related to **Hendra virus**.
3. **Fruit bats**, also called **flying foxes**, are the animal reservoir for NiV in nature.
4. **Symptoms:** Infection with NiV is associated with encephalitis (swelling of the brain) and can cause mild to severe illness and even death.

Insta Curious:

1. Do you know WHO's first ever list of antibiotic-resistant "priority pathogens" ? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:**Prelims Link:**

1. About Nipah.
2. Causes.
3. Symptoms.
4. Treatment and prevention.
5. What are zoonotic diseases?

Link:<https://www.google.com/amp/s/indianexpress.com/article/explained/in-bats-in-mahabaleshwar-cave-antibodies-against-nipah-virus-7369608/lite/>.

15. Peter Pan Syndrome (PPS):

Context:

A person accused of sexually assaulting a minor recently said in a special court in Mumbai that he suffered from "Peter Pan Syndrome".

- The court eventually granted bail to the accused based on different grounds.

But, what is Peter Pan syndrome?

The syndrome is named after a 1900s fictional character. Peter Pan is a **care-free young boy, who never grows up**. The character was created by Scottish novelist James Matthew Barrie.

- It is said that people who develop similar behaviours — of living life carefree, finding responsibilities challenging in adulthood, and basically, “never growing up” — suffer from Peter Pan Syndrome. Please note that **this syndrome has not been recognised by WHO as a health disorder.**

What are the Concerns?

- It is seen as a “social-psychological phenomenon”. It is a mental health condition that can affect one’s quality of life.
- It could affect one’s daily routine, relationships, work ethic, and result in attitudinal changes.

Who can be affected?

- It affects people who do not want or feel unable to grow up, people with the body of an adult but the mind of a child. They don’t know how to or don’t want to stop being children and start being mothers or fathers.

The Syndrome can affect anyone, irrespective of gender, race or culture. However, it appears to be more common among men.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about Wendy Syndrome? [Read what it means:](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims and Mains Link:

Meaning, symptoms and Concerns associated with the syndrome.

16. African swine fever:

Context:

[African Swine Fever \(ASF\)](#) was first reported in **Manipur** in December 2020 and there have been no cases since. Illegal import of pigs might have introduced the infection to the state, officials of the state veterinary department suspect.

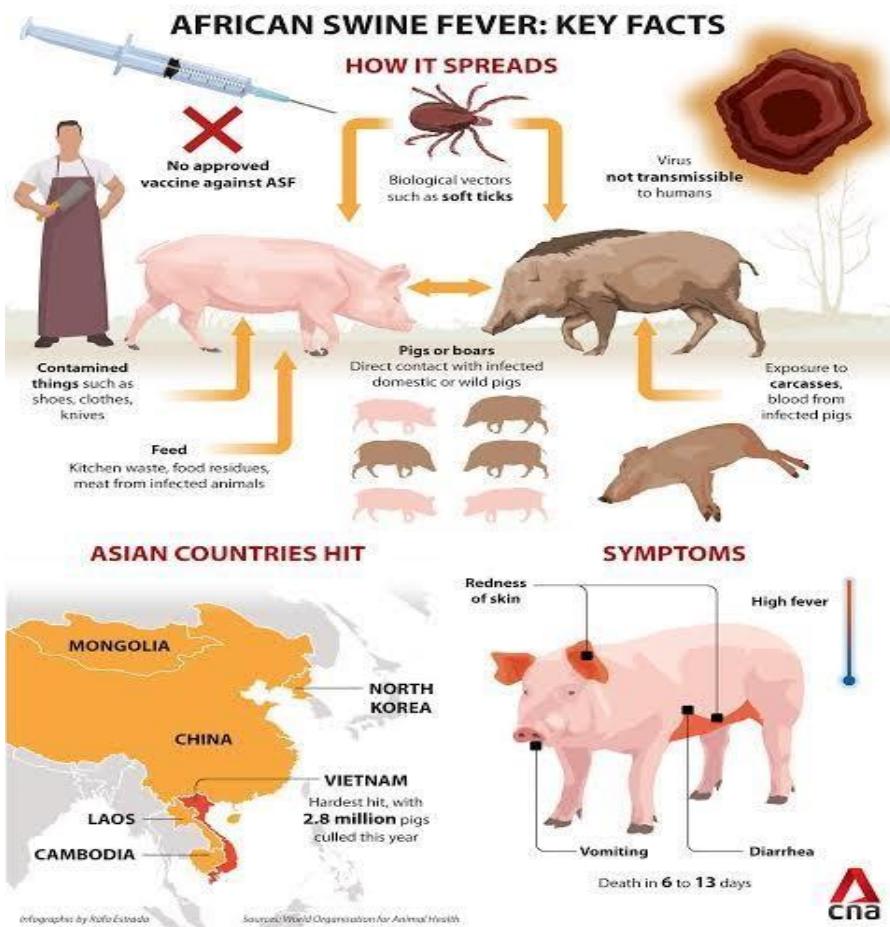
- Recently, four districts of **Mizoram** have been declared as epicentres of the African swine fever (ASF).

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.

INSIGHTS

- 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](#).

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- Can swine fever affect humans?
- Is it a viral disease?
- Where was it first discovered?
- Which countries have been affected by this in 2020?
- Is there any vaccine available against this?

Mains Link:

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

17. International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking 2021:

Context:

The day June 26 was chosen by the UN General Assembly, on December 7, 1987, as [International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking](#).

Objective: To create awareness about issues related to drugs and seek international cooperation to combat its effects on health, society, and governance.

Theme and its significance:

This year, the theme is 'Share Facts On Drugs, Save Lives'.

- According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the motive is to combat misinformation by sharing real facts on drugs — from health risks and solutions for the world drug problem to evidence-based prevention, treatment, and care.

World Drug Report 2021:

- Around 275 million people used drugs globally in the last year. Over 36 million people suffered from drug use disorders.
- Rise in the use of cannabis during the pandemic has been reported by most countries.
- Non-medical use of pharmaceutical drugs has also been observed in the same period.
- 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.
- Over 11 million people globally are estimated to inject drugs - half of them have Hepatitis C.
- 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 Abhiyaan](#)' 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.
2. Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment has begun implementation of a [National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction \(NAPDDR\) for 2018-2025](#).
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:

Do you know what Project Cohesion and Project Prism are? [Read Here](#)

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).
4. National Fund for Control of Drug Abuse.
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 Government in combating drug problem.

Topics: Role of civil services in a democracy.

1. Task force for Mission Karmayogi:

Context:

Former Infosys CEO S D Shibu Lal has been appointed chairperson of a three-member task force formed to help the government in bringing major bureaucratic reforms through its ambitious "[Mission Karmayogi](#)".

- The task force has been constituted to draw a clear road map for the guidance and operationalisation of the 'Karmayogi Bharat' and the constitution of a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV).

About Mission Karmayogi:

The 'National Programme for Civil Services Capacity Building - Mission Karmayogi' was launched to effect a transformational shift from rule based training to role-based capacity development of all civil services in the country so as to enhance citizen experience for government services and improve availability of competent workforce.

The core guiding principles of the Programme will be:

1. To emphasize on 'on-site learning' to complement the 'off-site' learning,
2. To create an ecosystem of shared training infrastructure including that of learning materials, institutions and personnel,
3. To calibrate all Civil Service positions to a Framework of Roles, Activities and Competencies (FRACs) approach and to create and deliver learning content relevant to the identified FRACs in every Government entity.
4. To make available to all civil servants, an opportunity to continuously build and strengthen their Behavioral, Functional and Domain Competencies in their self-driven and mandated learning paths.

Institutional framework and implementation of the programme:

1. **PM led Public Human Resources (HR) Council** to approve and monitor Civil Service Capacity Building Plans.
2. **Capacity Building Commission** to harmonize training standards, create shared faculty and resources, and have supervisory role over all Central Training Institutions.

3. Wholly owned Special Purpose Vehicle to own and operate the online learning platform and facilitate world-class learning content market-place.
4. Coordination Unit headed by the Cabinet Secretary.

Larger significance of the programme:

It aims to prepare the Indian Civil Servant for the future by making him more creative, constructive, imaginative, innovative, proactive, professional, progressive, energetic, enabling, transparent and technology-enabled. Empowered with specific role-competencies, the civil servant will be able to ensure efficient service delivery of the highest quality standards.

Insta Curious:

Think! Do we have courses/initiatives to bridge the gap between Young talent & India's Democratic Political entities & governance?

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About Mission Karmayogi.
2. Objectives.

3. Implementation.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of the mission.

Topics: India and its neighbourhood- relations.

1. Thousands of Rohingya protest at Bhashan Char:

Context:

Several thousand Rohingya recently staged “unruly” protests against living conditions on **Bhashan Char**- a cyclone-prone island off Bangladesh.

What's the issue?

Since December, Bangladesh has shifted 18,000 refugees to the low-lying silt island of Bhashan Char from the mainland China, where around 8,50,000 people live in squalid and cramped conditions.

What's the main concern now?

Bhasan Char (Floating Island) also known as Char Piya or Thengar Char Island, is an island in Hatiya, Bangladesh.

- The island was formed from a build-up of silt in the Bay of Bengal only 20 years ago, and concerns have been consistently raised about Bhasan Char's exposure to extreme weather and distance from the mainland in emergencies.

Who are Rohingyas?

- They are an **Ethnic group**, mostly Muslims. They were not granted full citizenship by Myanmar.
- They are, basically, **stateless, Indo-Aryan ethnic group who reside in Rakhine State, Myanmar**.
- There were an estimated 1 million Rohingya living in Myanmar before the 2016–17 crisis. An estimated 625,000 refugees from Rakhine, Myanmar, had crossed the border into Bangladesh since August 2017.

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

Protection available to Rohingyas under the International Conventions:

1. The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol:



They define the term 'refugee' and outlines the rights of refugees, as well as the legal obligations of States to protect them.

- The core principle is **non-refoulement**, which asserts that a refugee should not be returned to a country where they face serious threats to their life or freedom.
- However, the concern now is that **Bangladesh is not a signatory to this convention.**

2. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR):

Even though the refugees are foreigners in the country of asylum, by virtue of Article 2 of the ICCPR, 1966, they could enjoy the same fundamental rights and freedoms as nationals- **the right to equality before the law, equal protection of the law and non-discrimination.**

Insta Curious:

1. Know about some of the important refugee crisis across the world. [Read here](#),
2. Can India Turn the Rohingya Crisis' Tide? [Read here](#),

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Who are Rohingyas?
2. Location of Rakhine State.
3. ICJ vs International Criminal Court.

4. About the ICCPR.

5. About the 1951 Refugee Convention.

Mains Link:

Write a note on Rohingya Crisis.

Link: <https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GFV8KM7HR.1&imageview=0>.

2. India abstains from voting on UN's Myanmar resolution:

Context:

India recently abstained from voting on [the United Nations General Assembly's \(UNGA's\)](#) resolution for an arms embargo against Myanmar.

- 119 countries voted 'yes', Belarus voted 'no' and 36 countries abstained, including Myanmar's neighbors China and India, along with Russia.

Reasons behind India's move:

1. India said its views were not reflected in the draft resolution before the Assembly passed it.
2. India also said it does not believe that the tabling of this resolution for adoption at this juncture, is "conducive to aiding the country's joint efforts towards strengthening the democratic process in Myanmar."

About the UN Resolution:

- The UN's resolution demonstrated widespread global opposition to the Myanmar military and demanded that the country's democratic transition be restored.
- The resolution called upon the Myanmar armed forces to respect the people's will as freely expressed by results of the general election of November 8, 2020.

India is supporting **ASEAN initiative on Myanmar and the 'Five-Point Consensus'**:

It includes:

1. Immediate cessation of violence.
2. Dialogue among all stakeholders in Myanmar for a peaceful solution.
3. The appointment of a special Asean envoy to facilitate mediation.
4. Aid to Myanmar.
5. A visit to the country by the envoy.

Why should India be concerned about the situation in Myanmar?

For India, the stakes are high as instability within Myanmar has grave implications for the Northeast.

- There are reports of guerrilla groups in Myanmar reviving their activities and any breakdown of law and order will allow militant groups in the Northeast to take advantage of the situation.

What's happening in Myanmar?

The elected leaders of Myanmar were overthrown on February 1 this year in a coup by the army, which accused Aung Sang Suu Kyi's ruling party of cheating in the November elections. The army's allegation has been rejected by the previous election commission and international monitors.

What lies ahead for India?

India's reaction is likely to be different this time. India does care about democracy in Myanmar, but that's a luxury it knows it will not be able to afford for the time being. Why? Because,

1. **India's security relationship with the Myanmar military has become extremely close**, and it would be difficult to "burn bridges" with them given their assistance in securing the North East frontiers from insurgent groups.
2. **Changed image of Ms. Suu Kyi herself**: Her image as a democracy icon and Nobel peace laureate has been damaged by her time in office, where she failed to push back the military, and even defended the Army's pogrom against Rohingya in Rakhine State in 2015.
3. **Benefits for China**: A harsh reaction from India, on the lines of that from the U.S., which has threatened action against those responsible for the "coup" unless they revoke the military's takeover, would only benefit China.
4. Apart from strategic concerns, India has cultivated several infrastructure and development projects with Myanmar, which it sees as **the "gateway to the East" and ASEAN countries** (For example: India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway and the Kaladan multi-modal transit transport network, as well as a plan for a Special Economic Zone at the Sittwe deep-water port).
5. Besides, **India still hopes to help resolve the issue of Rohingya refugees** that fled to Bangladesh, while some still live in India, and will want to continue to engage the Myanmar government on that.

Myanmar's military Constitution:

It was the military that drafted the 2008 Constitution, and put it to a questionable referendum in April that year.

- The Constitution was the military's "roadmap to democracy", which it had been forced to adopt under increasing pressure from the west.
- It was also due to its own realisation that opening up Myanmar to the outside world was now no longer an option but a dire economic necessity.
- But the military made sure to safeguard in the Constitution its own role and supremacy in national affairs.
- Under its provisions, the military reserves for itself 25 per cent of seats in both Houses of Parliament, to which it appoints serving military officials.
- Also, a political party which is a proxy for the military contests elections.

Insta Curious:

1. Do you know how decisions are made at the UN? [Read here](#).
2. Do you remember the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About Myanmar.
2. Its constitution.
3. Comparison with Indian Constitution.

4. About UNGA.

5. Various UN Organisations.

Mains Link:

Discuss India's policy towards its neighbours.

3. Pakistan to remain on FATF grey list:

Context:

FATF has refused to take Pakistan out of the 'Grey List' yet again because it had failed to take appropriate action against UN-designated terrorists such as 26/11 accused Hafiz Saeed and JeM chief Masood Azhar.

Background:

Pakistan was put on the grey list by the Paris-based FATF in June 2018, and the country has been struggling to come out of it.

- It has now completed 26 of the 27 action items given to it in 2018.

About FATF:

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

Roles and functions:

- Initially it was established to examine and develop measures to combat money laundering.
- In October 2001, the FATF expanded its mandate to incorporate efforts to combat terrorist financing, in addition to money laundering.
- In April 2012, it added efforts to counter the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Composition:

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

What is a blacklist and grey list?

Black List: Countries known as Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs) are put in the blacklist. These countries support terror funding and money laundering activities. The FATF revises the blacklist regularly, adding or deleting entries.

Grey List: Countries that are considered safe haven for supporting terror funding and money laundering are put in the FATF grey list. This inclusion serves as a warning to the country that it may enter the blacklist.

Considered in the grey list may face:

1. Economic sanctions from IMF, World Bank, ADB.
2. Problem in getting loans from IMF, World Bank, ADB and other countries.
3. Reduction in international trade.
4. International boycott.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about Egmont Group? Is India Party to it? (Search for Egmont Group) [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. G7 vs G8 vs G20.
2. Black vs Grey list.

3. Are FATF's decisions binding on member countries?
4. Who heads the FATF?
5. Where is its secretariat?

Mains Link:

What is the mandate and objectives of the Financial Action Task Force? Discuss.

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

1. G7 meet.

Context:

The leaders of seven nations — the U.S., Germany, the U.K., France, Canada, Japan and Italy — met in Cornwall in south-west England, marking the 47th edition of the “Group of seven” summit.

India is a “natural ally” to work with the world’s richest G7 countries to fight against threats of authoritarianism, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, speaking at a special outreach session for guest countries on “Open Societies and Open Economies” at the G7 summit that ended in Corbis Bay, U.K., on Sunday.

Background:

The United Kingdom had invited India, Australia, South Africa and South Korea to attend the G7 summit that was scheduled to be held in June as “guest countries”

About the G7 meet:

1. The leaders of seven nations — the U.S., Germany, the U.K., France, Canada, Japan and Italy — met in Cornwall in south-west England, marking the 47th edition of the “Group of seven” summit.
2. G-7 leaders agreed on Sunday to raise their contributions to meet an overdue spending pledge of \$100 billion a year to help poorer countries cut carbon emissions and cope with global warming.
3. Addressing the First Outreach Session of G7 summit, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday conveyed India's commitment to “collective” solution to global health challenges.
4. Prime Minister Modi called for “one earth, one health” approach which aims for unity and solidarity among the states of the world to deal with the pandemic.
5. The Finance Ministers of the G7 had met on June 4-5 in the run-up to the summit and had agreed to backing a minimum global tax rate of 15% for multinational corporations, thereby setting the stage for MNCs to pay a fairer share of taxes in jurisdictions where they make money and profits, rather than playing governments in a race where they will compete on who will tax them the least and allowing MNCs to take advantage of “tax havens”.

What is G7?

The G7, **originally G8**, was set up in 1975 as an informal forum bringing together the leaders of the world's leading industrial nations.

The summit gathers **leaders from the European Union (EU) and the following countries**: Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The major purpose of the G-7 is to discuss and deliberate on international economic issues. It sometimes acts in concert to help resolve other global problems, with a special focus on economic issues.



How did G7 become G8?

1. Russia was formally inducted as a member in the group in 1998, which led G7 to become G8.
2. However, Russian President Vladimir Putin's condemnable act of moving Russian troops into eastern Ukraine and conquering Crimea in 2014 drew heavy criticism from the other G8 nations.
3. The other nations of the group decided to suspend Russia from the G8 as a consequence of its actions and the group became G7 again in 2014.

InstaCurious:

Do you know about the Four Asian Tigers? [Read Here](#)

2. Geographical location of member countries.

Mains Link:

Discuss the relevance of G7 countries today. What are the reforms necessary to make the grouping more effective?

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Groups: G7, G8, G10, G15, G20, G24 countries.

2. Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR):

Context:

The United Kingdom has appointed a liaison officer to the Indian Navy's [Information Fusion Centre for Indian Ocean Region \(IFC-IOR\)](#), which is meant for maritime domain awareness.

About IFC-IOR:

- The IFC-IOR was **set up in 2018** to coordinate with regional countries on maritime issues and act as a **regional repository of maritime data**.
- It presently has linkages with 21 partner countries and 22 multi-national agencies across the globe.
- It is **located in Gurugram, India**.



Roles and functions of a liaison officer:

The liaison officer will be based full-time at the centre, working directly with the Indian armed forces and fellow liaison officers from partner nations to enhance maritime domain awareness in the region.

- International Liaison Officers (ILO) from 13 countries have been invited, and ILOs from countries had joined earlier- Australia, France, Japan and the U.S.. **The U.K. is the 5th country to post an ILO**.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about the Indian Ocean Commision? [Read Here](#) (Briefly)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is IFC- IOR?
2. What is the Regional Maritime Information Fusion Centre (RMIFC)?

3. Who established European-led mission in the Strait of Hormuz (EMASOH)?
4. Locate Persian Gulf and strait of Hormuz.

Mains Link:

Discuss how observer status at the Indian Ocean Commission helps India secure its strategic objectives.

Link:<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/news/national/britain-posts-liaison-officer-at-indian-navys-information-fusion-centre/article34905498.ece/amp/>.

3. Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB) programme:

Context:

Bhutan's Tax Inspectors Without Borders (TIWB) programme launched in partnership with India.

- This programme is expected to be of about 24 months' duration.
- The focus of the programme will be in the area of International Taxation and Transfer Pricing.

Benefits of the programme:

Through this India in collaboration with the UNDP and the TIWB Secretariat aims to aid Bhutan in strengthening its tax administration by transferring technical know-how and skills to its tax auditors, and through sharing of best audit practices.

About TIWB Programme:

1. It is a joint initiative of [the United Nations Development Programme \(UNDP\)](#) and [the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development \(OECD\)](#).
2. **The objective** of the TIWB Initiative is to enable sharing of tax audit knowledge and skills with tax administrations in developing countries through a targeted, real time "learning by doing" approach.
3. **TIWB is focused on** promoting hands-on assistance by sending Experts to build audit and audit-related skills pertaining to specific international tax matters and the development of general audit skills within developing tax administrations.

Insta Curious:

Did you know about the Better Life Index developed by OECD? [Read here](#),

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About TIWB Programme.

2. Implementation.
3. Developed by?
4. Significance.

Mains Link: Discuss the significance of the Programme.

4. SCO meet:

Context:

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval has proposed **an action plan against Pakistan-based terror groups Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM)** as part of [the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation \(SCO\)](#) NSAs meet.

Background:

- LeT and JeM have been responsible for many terror attacks in India, especially in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
- JeM, created with the support of the Pakistan spy agency, was responsible for the Pulwama terror attack in which 40 Indian soldiers died.

Action Plan proposed:

1. Full implementation of UN resolutions and targeted sanctions against UN-designated terrorist individuals and entities.
2. Adoption of international standards to counter terror financing including an MOU between SCO and [Financial Action Task Force \(FATF\)](#).
3. Monitoring new technologies used by terrorists. This included use of drones and misuse of dark web, artificial intelligence, blockchain and social media.

About the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO):

It is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation.

Its creation was announced on 15 June 2001 in Shanghai (China) by the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

- It was preceded by the **Shanghai Five mechanism**.

The SCO's main goals are as follows:

Strengthening mutual trust and neighbourliness among the member states; promoting their effective cooperation in politics, trade, the economy, research, technology and culture, as well as in education, energy, transport, tourism, environmental protection, and other areas; making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region; and moving towards the establishment of a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order.

Membership:

SCO comprises eight member states, namely the Republic of India, the Republic of Kazakhstan, the People's Republic of China, the Kyrgyz Republic, the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Tajikistan, and the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about SCO RATS? Read [this](#) to understand its roles and functions.

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.
7. Official languages of SCO.

Mains Link:

Discuss the objectives and significance of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

5. Sri Lanka ‘banking on’ \$1 bn India swap deal:

Context:

Sri Lanka is “banking on” a **\$1 billion currency swap** from India to meet its debt repayment obligations this year and tide over the current economic crisis.

- Sri Lanka is a \$400 million swap from the Reserve Bank of India in a couple of months through the **SAARC facility**.

Background:

Sri Lanka is facing a foreign currency crisis in the midst of its debt service obligations.

What is this Currency Swap Arrangement (CSA)?

- It is an arrangement between two friendly countries to involve in trading in their own local currencies.
- As per the arrangements, both countries pay for import and export trade at the predetermined rates of exchange, without bringing in third country currency like the US Dollar.

RBI’s Framework for Swap Facilities for SAARC:

- The SAARC currency swap facility came into operation on 15th November, 2012.
- The RBI can offer a swap arrangement within the overall corpus of USD 2 billion.
- The swap drawals can be made in US dollar, euro or Indian rupee. The framework provides certain concessions for swap drawals in Indian rupee.
- The facility will be available to all SAARC member countries, subject to their signing the bilateral swap agreements.

Insta Curious:

Do you know what a Plain Vanilla Financial instrument is? [Read Here](#)

2. How is it done?

3. About SAARC Swap facility.

InstaLinks:**Prelims Link:**

1. What is Currency swap?

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of Currency Swap Arrangement.

[Link: <https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GE68NG18J.1&imageview=0>](https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GE68NG18J.1&imageview=0)

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

1. China to allow couples to have third child:

Context:

Days after China’s census data showed population growth slipping to its slowest rate since the 1950s, the country has announced it will now allow **three children per married couple**.

- Please note, five years ago in 2016, it first relaxed its controversial **one-child policy to two**.

Firstly, why was one-child policy implemented?

China embarked upon its one-child policy in 1980, when the Communist Party was concerned that the country’s growing population, which at the time was approaching one billion, would impede economic progress.

- It was enforced through several means, including incentivising families financially to have one child, making contraceptives widely available, and imposing sanctions against those who violated the policy.

Criticisms associated with this policy:

Chinese authorities have long hailed the policy as a success, claiming that it helped the country avert severe food and water shortages by preventing up to 40 crore people from being born. However, the one-child limit was also a source of discontent, as:

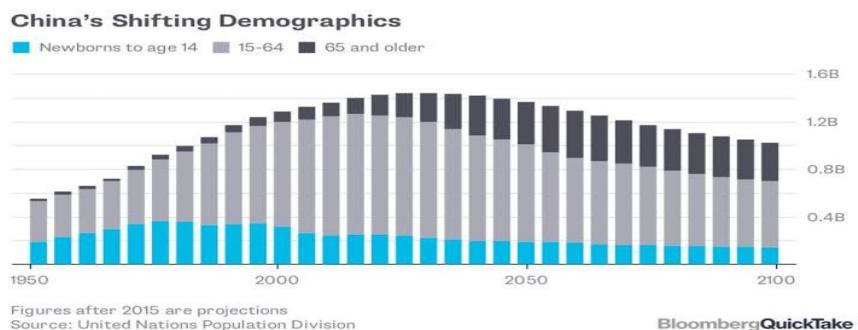
1. The state used brutal tactics such as forced abortions and sterilisations.
2. It violated human rights, and was unfair to poorer Chinese since the richer ones could afford to pay economic sanctions if they violated the policy.
3. It gave way for enforcing reproductive limits as a tool for social control.
4. It affected the sex ratio- skewed towards males.
5. It led to abortion of female fetuses rose and so did the number of girls who were placed in orphanages or abandoned.
6. It made China's population age faster than other countries, impacting the country's growth potential.

Why was it discontinued?

Fears of a rapidly ageing population undermining economic growth forced the ruling Communist Party to allow two children per married couple.

What necessitated further reforms?

While the relaxation did result in some improvement in the proportion of young people in the country, the policy change was deemed insufficient in averting an impending demographic crisis.



Challenges ahead:

Experts say relaxing limits on reproductive rights alone cannot go a long way in averting an unwanted demographic shift.

The main factors behind fewer children being born are:

1. Rising costs of living, education and supporting ageing parents.
2. Country's pervasive culture of long working hours.
3. Many couples believing that one child is enough, and some expressing no interest in having children.

Know about China's latest census report, <https://www.insightsonindia.com/2021/05/12/chinas-population-growth-slows-to-lowest-rate-in-decades/>.

Insta Curious:

Why India Does Not Need A Two-Child Law? [Read here](#),

Did you know that few Indian states too have such policies. [Read here](#),

Link: <https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GFV8KM7IB.1&imageview=0>.

2. Palestine flays India's abstention from vote:

Context:

A resolution titled “Ensuring respect for international human rights law and humanitarian law in Occupied Palestinian Territory including East Jerusalem and in Israel” recently came up at the Human Rights Council [HRC] against the backdrop of the latest round of conflict between Israel and Gaza strip, the coastal part of the Palestinian territories.

- However, India abstained from voting. Now, in response to this, Palestine has observed that such abstention suppresses human rights of “all people”.

Background:

The resolution was adopted with the vote of 24 members. Nine voted against, and 14, including India, abstained. The passing of the resolution led to the setting up of an independent commission of inquiry to investigate violation of international law by Israel.

How has India's policy on Israel and Palestine evolved over time?

India's policy on the longest running conflict in the world has gone from being unequivocally **pro-Palestine** for the first four decades, to a **tense balancing act** with its three-decade-old friendly ties with Israel. In recent years, India's position has also been perceived as **pro-Israel**.

1. Post 1948:

In 1948, India was the only non-Arab-state among 13 countries that voted against the UN partition plan of Palestine in the General Assembly that led to the creation of Israel.

- In 1975, India became the first non-Arab country to recognise the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people, and invited it to open an office in Delhi, which was accorded diplomatic status five years later.
- In 1988, when the PLO declared an independent state of Palestine with its capital in East Jerusalem, India granted recognition immediately.

2. Post 1992:

The balancing began with India's decision to normalise ties with Israel in 1992, which came against the backdrop of the **break-up of the Soviet Union**, and massive shifts in the geopolitics of West Asia on account of the **first Gulf War in 1990**.

- The opening of an Indian embassy in Tel Aviv in January 1992 marked an end to the earlier stand.

3. Until 2017:

India's position was that it **supported "the Palestinian cause** and called for a negotiated solution resulting in a sovereign, independent, viable and united State of Palestine, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living within secure and recognised borders, side by side at peace with Israel"- this was a **two- state solution**.

- Then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated this position in November 2013. So did then President Pranab Mukherjee, in October 2015.

4. Post 2017:

India dropped the references to East Jerusalem and the borders in 2017 when Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas visited Delhi. In 2018, when Mr. Modi visited Ramallah, he reaffirmed the same position, with no direct reference to the borders or Jerusalem.

What does this indicate?

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.

For more details on Israel- Palestine conflict, read:

<https://www.insightsonindia.com/2021/05/19/israel-palestine-conflict/>.

Insta Curious:

Do you know the difference between the Human Rights Council and UN Human Rights ? [Read Here](#)

Do you know about the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Where is the west bank?
2. Gaza strip.
3. Golan heights.
4. Who are Hamas?
5. What is Al-Nakba?

6. About the whole conflict.

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

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GDF8KRVM6.1&imageview=0>

3. UN Security Council endorses Secretary General Guterres for second term:

Context:

The [United Nations Security Council](#) has endorsed [Secretary-General](#) Antonio Guterres for a second five-year term- from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2026.

About the UN Secretary General:

The [UN Charter](#) describes the Secretary-General as "chief administrative officer" of the Organization, who shall act in that capacity and perform "such other functions as are entrusted" to them by **the Security Council, General Assembly, Economic and Social Council and other United Nations organs**.

- The Charter also empowers the Secretary-General to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in their opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.

Appointment:

The Security Council recommends a candidate for the General Assembly's 193 members to appoint. Although all UN members get a voice in the secretary-general's selection, **the five permanent members of the Security Council hold the most influence. Any one of them can eliminate a nominee with a veto.**

Issues/challenges with the office of UN Secretary General:

1. The UN Charter doesn't clearly define the functions and powers of the Secretary General.
2. Selection is not done entirely on merit and transparency.
3. Critics of the appointment process say it lacks transparency and falls prey to cronyism due to the permanent Security Council members' veto power and their secret negotiations over candidates.
4. The secretary-general often struggles to balance the interests of other large funders and powerful member states as well.

Significance of the office:

1. **Peacekeeping:** The secretary-general's office oversees peacekeeping missions and appoints the undersecretary in charge of that department.
2. **Mediation:** As part of the "good offices" responsibility of the position, the secretary-general practices independence and impartiality to prevent and limit conflict.

Insta Curious:

While the General Assembly or Security Council may initiate a peacekeeping mission, operational control rests with the Secretariat. Read [this](#) to understand more about the responsibilities of the secretary-general.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About UNSC.
2. Election of UN Secretary General.
3. Functions and powers.

Mains Link: Discuss the issues associated with the office of UN Secretary General.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GRG8LDPSV.1&imageview=0>.

4. BRICS opposes exceptionalism: China:

Context:

Virtual BRICS Foreign Ministers was held recently.

- At the end of the meeting two statements were issued on the "**Meeting of the BRICS Ministers of Foreign Affairs/International Relations**" and another on "**BRICS Joint Statement on Strengthening and Reforming the Multilateral System**".

What has China said on BRICS and its intended objectives?

1. BRICS countries pursue **openness, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation, and reject "bloc politics and ideological confrontation".**
2. The BRICS countries, as emerging markets and developing countries, are indeed different from a few developed countries in their attitude towards **multilateralism and multilateral cooperation.**

- The BRICS countries stress the need to observe the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and oppose exceptionalism and double standards.

What do these statements indicate/suggest?

- These statements clearly reveal that China is opposed to the formation of the Quad grouping amongst the US, India, Australia and Japan.
- It believes this group is targeting or harming the interests of third parties.

BRICS:

- BRICS** is an acronym for the grouping of the world's leading emerging economies, namely **Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa**.
- In 2001, the British Economist Jim O'Neill coined the term **BRIC** to describe the four emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China.
- The grouping was formalised during the first meeting of **BRIC Foreign Ministers' in 2006**.
- South Africa was invited to join BRIC in December 2010**, after which the group adopted the acronym BRICS.
- The Chairmanship of the forum is rotated annually among the members, in accordance with the acronym B-R-I-C-S.

Cooperation Mechanism: Cooperation among members is achieved through:

- Track I: Formal diplomatic engagement between the national governments.
- Track II: Engagement through government-affiliated institutions, e.g. state-owned enterprises and business councils.
- Track III: Civil society and People-to-People engagement.

India and BRICS:

- From the Indian perspective, BRICS has emerged as the voice of developing countries, or the global south.
- With raising challenges on issues from WTO to climate change, New Delhi believes BRICS has to protect the rights of the developing countries.
- BRICS has put counter-terrorism on top of the agenda, this has been a success for India.

Insta Curious:

- Did you know that India has assumed the BRICS Presidency from January 2021?
- The acronym similar to the term BRIC:
Do you know what MINTs is? Read [Here](#)
- Do you know What Next Eleven is? Read [Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- About BRICS.
- Summits.
- Presidency.
- Organisations and groups associated with BRICS.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance and relevance of BRICS for India.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GRG8LDPTF.1&imageview=0>.

5. G7 accommodates Indian stand on need for Internet curbs:

Context:

India has signed off on a joint statement by **G-7** and guest countries on "open societies" that reaffirm and encourage the values of "freedom of expression, both online and offline, as a freedom that safeguards democracy and helps people live free from fear and oppression".

- The statement also refers to "politically motivated internet shutdowns" as one of the threats to freedom and democracy.

Democracies 11:

The joint statement was signed by the G-7 countries, and India, South Korea, Australia and South Africa, with host British Prime Minister Boris Johnson calling them “**Democracies 11**”.

What India said on the need for internet curbs?

Open societies are particularly vulnerable to disinformation and cyber-attacks. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that “cyberspace remains an avenue for advancing democratic values and not of subverting it”. Hence, curbs on certain occasions are necessary.

Background:

India has been under scrutiny over **Internet curbs in Jammu and Kashmir** even as the Government is locked in a face-off over its **new IT rules** with tech giants such as Twitter, which described a police search at its offices in India last month as a “**potential threat to freedom of expression**”.

- Similar communication shutdowns were witnessed in Delhi and Assam during the protests against [the Citizenship Amendment Act](#) during 2019-2020 and the farmer’s protest last January.

What procedure does the government follow to suspend Internet services?

The **Information Technology Act, 2000**, the **Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), 1973** and the **Telegraph Act, 1885** are the three laws that deal with suspension of Internet services.

- But before 2017, Internet suspension orders were issued under **section 144 of the CrPC**.
- In 2017, the central government notified **the Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Service) Rules under the Telegraph Act** to govern suspension of Internet.
- These Rules derive their powers from Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph Act, which talks about interception of messages in the “interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India”.

Insta Curious:

[Know about latest efforts to reform criminal law system in India,](#)

4. Anuradha Bhasin case (2020) is related to?
5. Article 370 of the Constitution.

Mains Link:

Discuss about the various impacts of internet suspension in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G7B8LVD6A.1&imageview=0>.

6. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Year Book 2021:

Context:

Swedish think tank [Stockholm International Peace Research Institute \(SIPRI\)](#) has released its Year Book 2021.

Key findings:

1. **India possessed an estimated 156 nuclear warheads at the start of 2021**, compared with 150 at the start of last year, while Pakistan had 165 warheads, up from 160 in 2020.
2. China’s nuclear arsenal consisted of 350 warheads, up from 320 at the start of 2020.
3. **The nine nuclear armed states** — the U.S., Russia, the U.K., France, China, India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea — together possessed an estimated 13,080 nuclear weapons at the start of 2021.
4. **Russia and the U.S. together possessed over 90% of global nuclear weapons.**

What's the Concern now?

The overall number of warheads in global military stockpiles now appears to be increasing, a worrisome sign that the declining trend that has characterised global nuclear arsenals since the end of **the Cold War has stalled**.

1. The larger concern is that India and Pakistan are seeking new technologies and capabilities that dangerously undermine each other’s defence under the nuclear threshold.

- India-Pakistan “risk stumbling into using their nuclear weapons through miscalculation or misinterpretation in a future crisis.
- China’s evolving profile as a nuclear-weapons state was compounding India’s security challenges.

India's stand on nuclear weapons:

India remains committed to the policy of **No First Use (NFU)** against nuclear weapon states and **non-use against non-nuclear-weapon states**.

The Conference on Disarmament (CD) remains the “world’s single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum” and India supports holding of negotiations on a Comprehensive Nuclear Weapons Convention at the CD.

- India also remains committed to negotiations regarding a **Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT)** in the CD.

Insta Curious:

Did you know that SIPRI also releases the annual report ‘**Trends in World Military Expenditure**’? Read the latest report [here](#),

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- What is SIPRI?
- How many nuclear armed states are there in the world?
- 2020 nuclear warhead inventories.
- Comparison with previous report findings?
- What is the New START treaty?
- Which countries have reduced nuclear warheads over the last year?

7. What is nuclear triad?

Mains Link:

Comment on the latest findings of 2020 SIPRI Yearbook.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GV38LVNE4.1&imageview=0>.

7. Supreme Court closes criminal case against Italian Marines:

Context:

The Supreme Court has closed a criminal case initiated against two **Italian marines** who killed two fishermen off the Kerala coast, setting the stage for the Italian government to try them in their own country as per **an international tribunal award**.

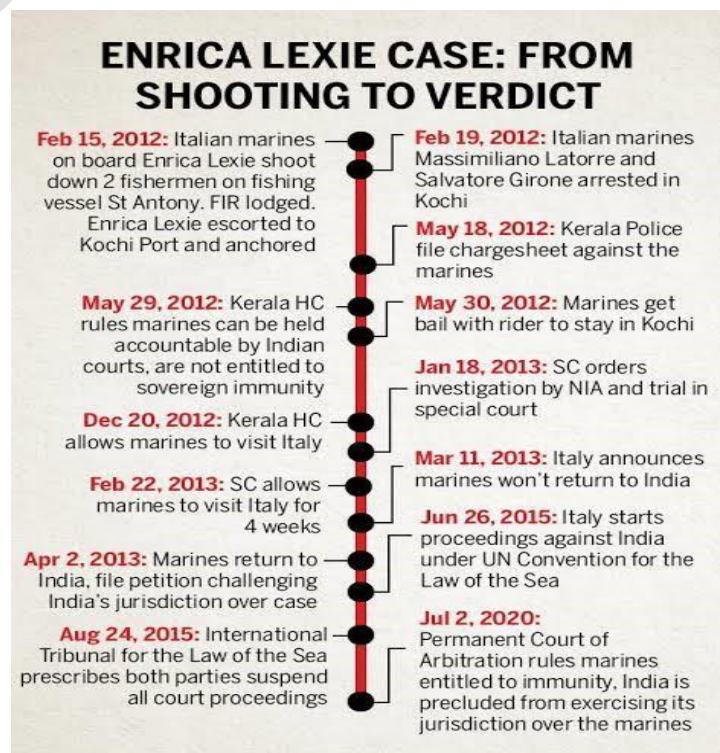
- It has also accepted the additional compensation of Rupees 10 crores offered by the Republic of Italy to the victims of the 2012 sea-firing incident which took place near Kerala coast.

Article 142:

The Government of India urged the Court to invoke the extraordinary power under **Article 142 of the Constitution** to quash the criminal cases against Marines, as the international tribunal under [the United Nations Convention on Law of Seas](#) had ruled that India lacks the jurisdiction to criminally prosecute them.

What had the tribunal held?

- In a close 3:2 vote, the tribunal ruled that the Italian marines enjoyed diplomatic immunity as Italian state officials under the United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea.



- Taking note of the “commitment expressed by Italy” to resume its criminal investigation into the incident, the tribunal said India must cease to exercise its jurisdiction.

Insta Curious:

What is Freedom of Navigation Operations?

[Read here](#),

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. PCA- composition, functions and members.
2. What is UNCLOS?

3. Articles 87, 90 and 100 of UNCLOS are related to?
4. About International Tribunal for Law of the Sea (ITLOS).
5. What is NIA?
6. About the Permanent Court of Arbitration.

Mains Link:

Discuss the functions and significance of PCA.

8. At UNHRC, grave concerns raised over Xinjiang:

Context:

More than 40 countries led by Canada have voiced grave concerns at [the UN Human Rights Council \(UNHRC\)](#) about China's actions in Xinjiang, Hong Kong and Tibet.

What were the demands?

Beijing must allow UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet and other independent observers “immediate, meaningful and unfettered access” to Xinjiang, and end the “arbitrary detention” of Uighurs and other Muslim minorities.

What's the issue?

Credible reports indicate that over a million people have been arbitrarily detained in Xinjiang and that there is widespread surveillance disproportionately targeting Uighurs and members of other minorities and restrictions on fundamental freedoms and Uighur culture.

China's response:

Despite mounting evidence, China denies mistreating the Uyghurs, and goes on to insist it is simply running “vocational training” centres designed to counter extremism.

Who are Uighurs?

The Uighurs are a predominantly **Muslim minority Turkic ethnic group**, whose origins can be traced to Central and East Asia.

The Uighurs speak their own language, similar to Turkish, and see themselves as culturally and ethnically close to Central Asian nations.

- China recognises the community only as a regional minority and rejects that they are an indigenous group.
- Currently, the largest population of the Uighur ethnic community lives in the Xinjiang region of China.
- A significant population of Uighurs also lives in the neighbouring Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.



Uighur Muslims for decades, under the false accusation of terrorism and separatism, have suffered from abuses including persecution, forced detention, intense scrutiny, surveillance and even slavery.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about China's One Country Two Systems policy? Which regions are administered under this policy? [Read this](#),

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Who are Uighurs?
2. Where is Xinjiang?

3. Who are Han Chinese?
4. Indian states bordering Xinjiang province.

Mains Link:

Who are Uighurs? Why are they in news? Discuss.

Link: <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/news/international/at-unhrc-grave-concerns-raised-over-xinjiang/article34914963.ece/amp/>.

9. OPEC and rising oil prices:

Context:

India is working to persuade oil exporting countries to moderate surging oil prices and warned that high prices would push the country **to tap alternative import sources such as Iran**.

- The **Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies (OPEC+)** are expected to discuss a possible easing of supply cuts, amid a rebound in global demand, on July 1.

Current Challenges being faced by India:

1. With retail prices for petrol crossing ₹100 a litre in several States, ‘today’s price is very challenging’.
2. **International oil prices have risen** past USD 75 per barrel in recent days -- highest since April 2019 -- on consumption recovery as well as supplies being short of demand.
3. High oil prices are adding to **inflationary pressures**.
4. Exhausting the **strategic petroleum reserves** it had built up last year by taking advantage of lower oil prices.
5. **Increasing central and state taxes on petrol and diesel** are also the key reason for the prices of petrol and diesel being at record highs.
6. India’s oil demand has also risen by 25% in the last seven years - more than any other major buyer.

Impact of OPEC:

OPEC nations such as Saudi Arabia have traditionally been its principal oil source. But **OPEC and its allies, called OPEC+,** ignoring its call for ease supply curbs had led to the world's third-biggest oil importer tap newer sources to diversify its crude oil imports.

- As a result, OPEC's share in India's oil imports has dropped to about 60 per cent in May from 74 per cent in the previous month.

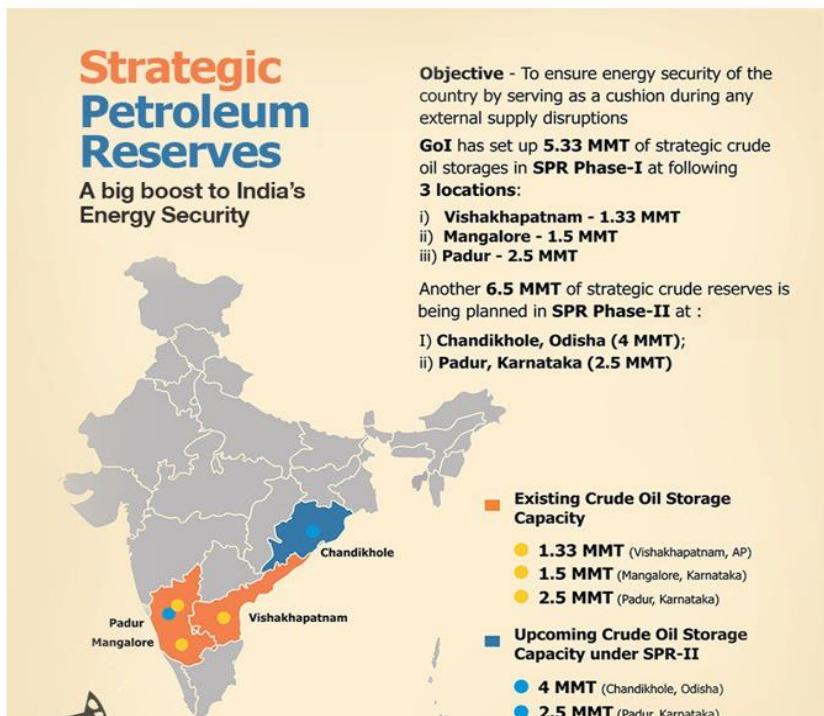
India's oil imports:

1. India is the world's third-largest consumer of crude.
2. United States is India's second-largest supplier after Iraq.

India's Plan on strategic Petroleum reserve:

Indian Strategic Petroleum Reserves Ltd (ISPR), has constructed three strategic petroleum reserves in huge underground rock caverns at **Visakhapatnam (1.33 MMT) on the East Coast, and at Mangaluru (1.5MMT) and Padur (2.5 MMT) on the West Coast.**

- ISPR is a wholly owned subsidiary of Oil Industry Development Board (OIDB) under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas.
- The new facilities approved recently can provide additional supply for about 12 days.



- The government of India is planning to set up two more such caverns at **Chandikhol (Odisha) and Udupi (Karnataka) as per phase II through Public-Private Partnership.**
- Thus, a total of 22 days (10+12) of oil consumption will be made available by ISPR.

Insta Curious:

Do you know the differences between Brent Crude Oil Vs WTI oil? [Read Here](#)

2. What is OPEC?

3. About OPEC Plus.

4. About ISPRL.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About Crude oil and its byproducts.

Mains Link:

Write a note on India's Plan on strategic Petroleum reserves.

Link: <https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GE68NG18T.1&imageview=0>.

10. What is EU's new 'vaccine passport' programme, and why has Covishield not been included?

Context:

- **Covishield**, manufactured by Serum Institute of India, is **not among the vaccines which have been approved by the European Medicines Agency (EMA)** for its "vaccine passport" programme that allows free movement of people in and out of Europe.

Which are the vaccines that have been approved by EMA for the purpose?

The EMA list only **includes four vaccines** now Vaxzevria (Oxford-AstraZeneca), Comirnaty (Pfizer-BioNTech), Spikevax (Moderna) and Janssen (Johnson & Johnson).

What is the 'green pass' which will ease travel restrictions across EU?

The **EU Digital Covid Certificate**, or the "green pass" as it is popularly known, has been created to restore freedom of travel for the public and remove the barriers on entry placed due to the pandemic.

- It is a digital proof that a person has either been vaccinated against Covid-19, or received a negative test result, or recovered from the viral infection. The document is valid across all EU countries.
- While the "green pass" is expected to make the experience of travel hassle-free for people by doing away with restrictions, it is not absolutely compulsory.

Why has Covishield not been included in the list?

Serum Institute of India has not applied for Covishield's approval.

Though **Vaxzevria** has been among the vaccines approved by EMA, Covishield, which is derived from AstraZeneca's shot, is not on the list.

- This is because **the EMA takes into consideration local manufacturing facilities**. Even if the vaccine is the same, different manufacturers of the same product need to submit separate applications for approval from EMA.

What is India's stand on 'vaccine passports'?

Though the EU has made it clear that the "green pass" will not be compulsory, the issue has once again raked up the larger debate on **concerns around privacy and ethics**.

- The 'vaccine passport' has been largely touted to be a ticket back to normalcy, but it has given rise to larger concerns over **intrusion, privacy and a curb on the right to free movement**.
- At the recent meeting of **G7 countries**, Union Health Minister Harsh Vardhan said that **India was strongly opposed to a 'vaccine passport' at this juncture**.

Larger concern:

With vaccine coverage as a % of population in developing countries still low compared to developed countries, such an initiative could prove to be highly discriminatory.

Insta Curious:

Did you know that the history of vaccine passports dates back to Edward Jenner's development of the first known vaccine in 1796? The vaccine was against Smallpox. [Read about this](#) (briefly)
(This article gives good information for your Mains answer).

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About Vaccine Passports.
2. Various countries having this facility.

Mains Link: Discuss concerns associated with Vaccine Passport Programmes.

Link:<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-eu-vaccine-passport-covishield-not-included-7381386/lite/>.

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

1. China and Central & Eastern European (CEE) 17+1 mechanism:

Context:

Lithuania has justified its decision to pull out of [the China and Central & Eastern European \(CEE\) 17+1 mechanism](#), which is seen as a pro-China grouping of countries within the EU. It has also denied that [the decision came because of U.S. pressure](#).

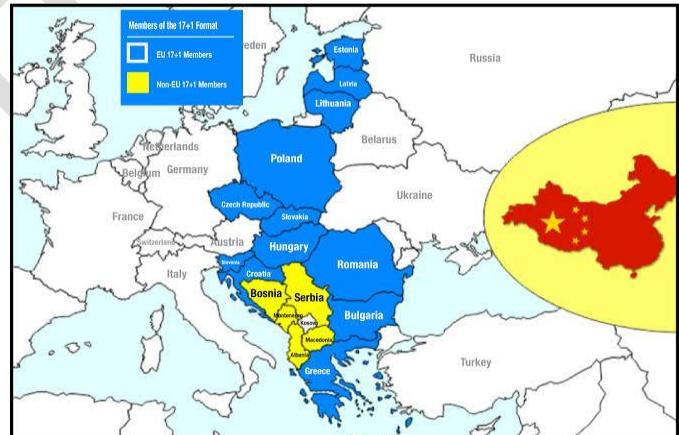
What was the main trigger for this decision?

1. The '17 plus one' format became a divisive forum; it was supposed to act as **Europe's one strong voice**.
2. **Tensions between China and Lithuania have been building up over a number of issues:** Lithuania's new ties with Taiwan, its Parliament's resolution on Uighurs, and then Chinese sanctions on Lithuanian and EU politicians.
3. **China has also decided to impose entry bans and sanctions** against some European politicians and academics, and that has had an impact on EU-China relations.

What is the "17+1" initiative?

The 17+1 initiative is a **China-led format** founded in 2012 in Budapest with an aim to expand **cooperation between Beijing and the Central and Eastern European (CEE) member countries**, with investments and trade for the development of the CEE region.

- The framework also **focuses on infrastructure projects** such as bridges, motorways, railway lines and modernisation of ports in the member states.



What's in it for China?

China's narrative towards the 17+1 initiative is about improving its relations with the European countries that are less developed as compared to the Western European states.

- However, the platform is largely seen as **an extension of China's flagship Belt and Road initiative (BRI)**.

Composition:

The initiative includes twelve EU member states and five Balkan states — Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Macedonia, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Slovenia.

Insta Curious:

Related reading of China's Policy:

1. Do you know China's One Country Two Systems Policy? [Read Here](#)
2. Do you think One Country Two Systems policy to be a possible solution for the Israel-Palestine Conflict?

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What are Baltic nations?
2. About the European Union.
3. What is CEE 17+1 mechanism?
4. About Belt and Road Initiative.
5. Countries in Eurozone vs EU.

Mains Link:

How China is marking its presence in and around Asia? Discuss.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GRK8KP5HD.1&imageview=0>.

2. UNGA head:

Context:

India has decided to vote in support of Maldives' Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid in the election of the President of [the United Nations General Assembly](#).

- This time the UNGA head will be chosen from the **Asia-Pacific grouping**.

[**Asia- Pacific group of the UN:**](#)

- Consists of 53 Member States and is the second largest regional group by number of member states after the African Group.
- Its territory is composed of much of the continents of Asia and Oceania with the exception of a few countries.

About UNGA:

The General Assembly is **the main deliberative, policymaking and representative organ of the UN**.

- All 193 Member States of the UN are represented in the General Assembly, making it **the only UN body with universal representation**.
- **The President** of the General Assembly is elected each year by assembly to serve a one-year term of office.
- **The presidency rotates annually between the five geographic groups:** African, Asia-Pacific, Eastern European, Latin American and Caribbean, and Western European and other States.

How are the decisions taken?

- Decisions on important questions, such as those on peace and security, admission of new members and budgetary matters, require a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly.
- Decisions on other questions are by simple majority.

The Assembly **has no binding votes or veto powers** like the UN Security Council.

According to the Charter of the United Nations, the General Assembly may:

1. Consider and approve the United Nations budget and establish the financial assessments of Member States.
2. Elect the non-permanent members of the Security Council and the members of other United Nations councils and organs and, on the recommendation of the Security Council, appoint the Secretary-General.
3. Consider and make recommendations on the general principles of cooperation for maintaining international peace and security, including disarmament.
4. Discuss any question relating to international peace and security and, except where a dispute or situation is currently being discussed by the Security Council, make recommendations on it.

Insta Curious:

Did you know that the year 2020 marks the 75th anniversary of the United Nations and its founding Charter?

<https://www.un.org/en/observances/un-day#:~:text=The%20year%202020%20marks%20the,severe%20economic%20and%20social%20impacts.>

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Which countries are not a part of UNGA?

2. How is the president of UNGA elected?

3. Name the permanent members of UNSC?

4. How are non permanent members elected?

5. Voting powers at UNSC.
6. How are non permanent seats distributed?
7. UNGA vs UNSC.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GDF8KRL8.1&imageview=0>.

3. Clean Energy Ministerial's (CEM) – Industrial Deep Decarbonization Initiative (IDDI):

Context:

India along with Govt. of United Kingdom launched new workstream to promote industrial energy efficiency under [the Clean Energy Ministerial's \(CEM\) – Industrial Deep Decarbonization Initiative \(IDDI\)](#) at [the 12th Chief Energy Ministerial \(CEM\)](#).

What is Industrial Deep Decarbonization Initiative (IDDI)?

- It is a global coalition of public and private organisations who are working to stimulate demand for low carbon industrial materials.
- In collaboration with national governments, IDDI works to standardise carbon assessments, establish ambitious public and private sector procurement targets, incentivise investment into low-carbon product development and design industry guidelines.
- Coordinated by [United Nations Industrial Development Organization \(UNIDO\)](#).
- Members: The IDDI is co-led by the UK and India and current members include Germany and Canada.

About Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM):

Establishment:

- It was established in December 2009 at the UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change conference of parties in Copenhagen.
- CEM is a high-level global forum to promote policies and programs that advance clean energy technology, to share lessons learned and best practices, and to encourage the transition to a global clean energy economy.
- 29 countries are part of CEM including India.

Insta Curious:

Why industrial decarbonization is an opportunity for India to fight climate change? [Read here,](#)

InstaLinks:

4. What is UNIDO?

Prelims Link:

1. About CEM.
2. About IDDI.
3. UN's Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Mains Link:

What is Industrial Deep Decarbonization Initiative (IDDI)? Discuss.

4. Syria has likely used chemical weapons 17 times: OPCW:

Context:

The head of the [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons](#) told the UN Security Council that its experts have investigated 77 allegations against Syria, and concluded that in 17 cases chemical weapons were likely or definitely used.

Background:

Syria was pressed to join [the Chemical Weapons Convention](#) in September 2013 by its close ally Russia after a deadly chemical weapons attack that the West blamed on Damascus.

About OPCW:

1. It is an international organization established by the [Chemical Weapons Convention](#), 1997 to implement and enforce the terms of the non-proliferation treaty, which prohibits the use, stockpiling, or transfer of chemical weapons by signatory states.

2. By the 2001 Relationship Agreement between the OPCW and the United Nations, **the OPCW reports on its inspections and other activities to the UN through the office of the Secretary General.**
3. The organisation was awarded **the 2013 Nobel Peace Prize** “for its extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons”.

Powers:

- The OPCW is authorized to perform inspections to verify that signatory states are complying with the convention.

The Chemical Weapons Convention prohibits:

1. Developing, producing, acquiring, stockpiling, or retaining chemical weapons.
2. The direct or indirect transfer of chemical weapons.
3. Chemical weapons use or military preparation for use.
4. Assisting, encouraging, or inducing other states to engage in CWC-prohibited activity.
5. The use of riot control agents “as a method of warfare.”

Insta Curious:

Did you know? India's Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has been chosen as **the external auditor by the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW)** for a three-year term starting 2021. [Read here,](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About OPCW.
2. What is CWC?
3. Members.
4. Functions of the executive council.

5. Roles and functions of the external auditor of OPCW.

Mains Link:

Write a note on the chemical weapons convention.

5. NTPC joins UN's CEO Water mandate:

Context:

India's largest power utility, NTPC Ltd, has become a signatory of [UN Global Compact's CEO Water Mandate](#).

What is CEO Water Mandate?

It is a **UN Global Compact initiative** which demonstrates commitment and efforts of companies to enhance their water and sanitation agendas in line with **Sustainable Development Goals**.

- It has been designed to assist companies in developing, implementing and disclosing comprehensive water strategies and policies.
- It provides a platform for companies to link with like-minded businesses, public authorities, UN agencies, civil society organizations etc.

What is UN Global Compact initiative?

- It is a non-binding United Nations pact to encourage businesses and firms worldwide to adopt sustainable and socially responsible policies, and to report on their implementation.
- Launched in 2000.
- It is a **principle-based framework** for businesses, stating ten principles in the areas of human rights, labor, the environment and anti-corruption.
- Under the Global Compact, companies are brought together with UN agencies, labor groups and civil society.
- Cities can join the Global Compact through [the Cities Programme](#).

NTPC's vision:

NTPC has already taken a series of measures across its plant locations on sound water management.

- NTPC will further imbibe **the 3 R's (reduce, reuse, recycle)** for water conservation and management while carrying out its core business activity of power generation.

What is the extent of water crisis in India?

- The **NITI Aayog report** on 'Composite Water Management Index (2018)' underlines that over 600 million Indians face high to extreme water stress.
- **According to a World Bank report**, the amount of water currently available to an individual will fall below half of the 1,588 cubic meters per year by 2030. This will create unimaginable disaster for the majority people in India.

India has **4% of the world's freshwater which has to cater to 17% of the world's population.**

Insta Curious:

Do you know about the Protocol on Water and Health? Is India a signatory to this? [Read here,](#)

Did you know, Uttarakhand is the first state in the country to introduce Gross Environment Product? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About UN CEO water mandate.
2. About UN Global Compact initiative.
3. Global Compact Cities Programme.

4. NITI Aayog report on 'Composite Water Management Index.

Mains Link:

Write a note on UN Global Compact Initiative.

6. G7 corporate tax deal:

Context:

Finance ministers from wealthy [G7 nations](#) have endorsed a **new global corporate tax deal**.

- The agreement will now be discussed in detail at a meeting of [G20 financial ministers](#) and central bank governors in July.

Highlights of the new deal:

1. The aim is **to counter tax avoidance** to make companies pay in the countries where they do business.
2. The agreement commits states to a **global minimum corporate tax rate of 15%** to avoid countries undercutting each other.

Need for a minimum rate:

1. The decision to ratify a 15% floor rate follows from a **declaration of war on low-tax jurisdictions around the globe by the US**.
2. The rationale behind this move is **to discourage the shifting of multinational operations and profits overseas.**

Focus of the plan:

3. The minimum rate is tailored to address **the low effective rates of tax shelled out by some of the world's biggest corporations**, including digital giants such as Apple, Alphabet and Facebook. These companies typically rely on complex webs of subsidiaries **to hoover profits out of major markets into low-tax countries** such as Ireland or Caribbean nations.

Issues/problems with the plan:

1. Impinges on **the right of sovereign nations** to decide a nation's tax policy.
2. A global minimum rate would essentially take away **a tool that countries use to push policies that suit them.**
3. Also, a global minimum tax rate will do little to tackle **tax evasion**.

Is this the end of tax havens?

If the deal does not kill off tax havens entirely, it will make them far less attractive for many firms looking to cut their tax bill but also burnish their credentials with investors focusing on environmental, social and corporate governance.

Impact on India:

Since India's effective tax rate is above the global minimum tax rate, it would not impact companies doing business in India. The global minimum rate impacts companies using low-tax jurisdiction to achieve low global tax cost. Moreover, India attracts foreign investment owing to its large internal market, quality labour at competitive rates, strategic location for exports, and a thriving private sector.

Insta Curious:

Do you know what Tax Cheat is? [Read Here](#)

Do you think there is any difference between Tax Cheat and Tax Fraud?

Mains Link:

Discuss the need for a global minimum corporate tax.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About G7 nations.
2. What are G20 and G8 groups.
3. Corporate tax structure in India.
4. Equalisation levy in India.

Link:<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-what-the-g7-corporate-tax-deal-means-for-india-7345684/lite/>.

7. China hosts ASEAN Foreign Ministers:

Context:

China is hosting **Foreign Ministers from the 10 ASEAN countries**. The event also marks the 30-year anniversary of relations.

- ASEAN is being seen as a key space where Chinese and Quad initiatives may rub up against each other.

Concerns for China:

There are possibilities that Quad members will further rope in ASEAN members to counter China as Southeast Asia is of great significance to the U.S.' Indo-Pacific Strategy.

- China recently called the Quad as "an Asian [NATO](#)".

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**.

Insta Curious:

India has progressed to be a Strategic partner to ASEAN in 2012 from Sectoral Dialogue Partnership in 1992. Read [here](#). (Know about the different forms or partnerships that exists)

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=G268LAKAH.1&imageview=0>.

8. Maldives wins UNGA election, India seeks close cooperation:

Context:

In a first for the Maldives, Foreign Minister Abdulla Shahid was elected the President of **the UN General Assembly** for 2021-22.

Note: We have Covered this article in-depth previously on:

<https://www.insightsonindia.com/2021/06/03/unga-head/>.

9. UN Security Council endorses Secretary General Guterres for second term:

Context:

The **United Nations Security Council** has endorsed **Secretary-General** Antonio Guterres for a second five-year term- from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2026.

About the UN Secretary General:

The **UN Charter** describes the Secretary-General as "**chief administrative officer**" of the Organization, who shall act in that capacity and perform "such other functions as are entrusted" to them by **the Security Council, General Assembly, Economic and Social Council and other United Nations organs**.

- The Charter also empowers the Secretary-General to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter which in their opinion may threaten the maintenance of international peace and security.

Appointment:

The Security Council recommends a candidate for the General Assembly's 193 members to appoint. Although all UN members get a voice in the secretary-general's selection, **the five permanent members of the Security Council hold the most influence. Any one of them can eliminate a nominee with a veto.**

Issues/challenges with the office of UN Secretary General:

5. The UN Charter doesn't clearly define the functions and powers of the Secretary General.
6. Selection is not done entirely on merit and transparency.
7. Critics of the appointment process say it lacks transparency and falls prey to cronyism due to the permanent Security Council members' veto power and their secret negotiations over candidates.
8. The secretary-general often struggles to balance the interests of other large funders and powerful member states as well.

Significance of the office:

3. **Peacekeeping:** The secretary-general's office oversees peacekeeping missions and appoints the undersecretary in charge of that department.
4. **Mediation:** As part of the "good offices" responsibility of the position, the secretary-general practices independence and impartiality to prevent and limit conflict.

Insta Curious:

While the General Assembly or Security Council may initiate a peacekeeping mission, operational control rests with the Secretariat. Read [this](#) to understand more about the responsibilities of the secretary-general.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

4. About UNSC.

5. Election of UN Secretary General.

6. Functions and powers.

Mains link: Discuss the issues associated with the office of UN Secretary General.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GRG8LDPSV.1&imageview=0>.

10. Pak. passes Bill to let Jadhav appeal:

Context:

Pakistan's National Assembly has passed **the ICJ (Review and Reconsideration) Bill, 2020** to provide the right of appeal to death-row prisoner Kulbhushan Jadhav.

- The Bill is aimed at allowing Jadhav to have consular access in line with [the International Court of Justice \(ICJ\)](#) verdict.

What's the issue?

- 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.
- India approached the ICJ against Pakistan for denial of consular access to Jadhav and challenging the death sentence.
- The Hague-based ICJ had ruled in July 2019 that Pakistan must undertake an "effective review and reconsideration" of the conviction and sentence of Jadhav and also to grant consular access to India without further delay.

Key observations made by the ICJ:

- Islamabad has violated Article 36 of [Vienna Convention of Consular Relations, 1963](#), by not informing India about Jadhav's arrest immediately after Pakistan Army had taken him into custody.
- India had been deprived of 'right to communicate' with and have access to Jadhav, to visit him in detention and to arrange for his legal representation'.

About ICJ:

- ICJ was established in 1945 by the United Nations charter and started working in April 1946.
- It is the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, situated at the Peace Palace in The Hague (Netherlands).
- Unlike the six principal organs of the United Nations, it is the only one not located in New York (USA).
- It settles legal disputes between States and gives advisory opinions in accordance with international law, on legal questions referred to it by authorized United Nations organs and specialized agencies.

Structure:

- The Court is composed of 15 judges, who are elected for terms of office of nine years by the United Nations General Assembly and the Security Council. These organs vote simultaneously but separately.
- In order to be elected, a candidate must receive an absolute majority of the votes in both bodies.
- In order to ensure a measure of continuity, one third of the Court is elected every three years and Judges are eligible for re-election.
- ICJ is assisted by a Registry, its administrative organ. Its official languages are English and French.

The 15 judges of the Court are distributed in following regions:

- Three from Africa.
- Two from Latin America and Caribbean.
- Three from Asia.
- Five from Western Europe and other states.
- Two from Eastern Europe.

Independence of judges:

Unlike other organs of international organizations, **the Court is not composed of representatives of governments**. Members of the Court are independent judges whose first task, before taking up their duties, is to make a solemn declaration in open court that they will exercise their powers impartially and conscientiously.

Jurisdiction and Functioning:

- ICJ acts as a world court with two fold jurisdiction i.e. **legal disputes between States submitted to it by them** (contentious cases) and **requests for advisory opinions on legal questions referred to it by United Nations organs and specialized agencies (advisory proceedings)**.
- Only States which are members of the United Nations and which have become parties to the Statute of the Court or which have accepted its jurisdiction under certain conditions, are **parties to contentious cases**.
- **The judgment is final, binding on the parties to a case and without appeal** (at the most it may be subject to interpretation or, upon the discovery of a new fact, revision).

Insta Curious:

Do you know what extraterritoriality is? [Read Here](#)

3. Doha accord between US and Taliban.

4. What is Rome statute?

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Differences between ICJ and ICC.
2. Geographical locations of these organisations and overview of surrounding countries.

Mains Link:

Write a note on ICJ.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GFR8LNF61.1&imageview=0>

11. NATO Summit:

Context:

NATO Summit was held recently in Brussels. It brought together the leaders of all 30 Allied nations.

Outcomes of the meet:

1. The heads of the NATO countries said they "remain firmly committed to **NATO's founding Washington Treaty**, including that **an attack against one Ally shall be considered an attack against us all, as enshrined in Article 5.**"
2. It included language about **updating Article 5 to include major cyberattacks**, which have become a significant and growing concern.

About North Atlantic Treaty Organization:

- It is an intergovernmental military alliance.
- Established by Washington treaty.
- Treaty that was signed on 4 April 1949.
- Headquarters — Brussels, Belgium.
- Headquarters of Allied Command Operations — Mons, Belgium.



Composition:

- Since its founding, the admission of new member states has increased the alliance from the original 11 countries to 30. The most recent member state to be added to NATO was North Macedonia on 27 March 2020.
- NATO membership is open to "any other European state in a position to further the principles of this Treaty and to contribute to the security of the North Atlantic area."

Insta Curious:

Why do you think engagement with NATO must be an important part of India's new European orientation?

Read [here](#)

3. Who can become members of NATO?

4. Overview of the Washington Treaty.

5. Countries surrounding the North Atlantic Ocean.

6. Latest NATO member.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. NATO- genesis and headquarters.
2. What is NATO Allied Command Operations?

Mains Link:

Discuss the objectives and significance of NATO.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GDP8LVB9H.1&imageview=0>.

12. Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Conference:

Context:

The 42nd session of **the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Conference** was held recently.

- For the first time ever, the FAO Conference is held in virtual mode.

About the Conference:

- The Conference takes place every two years and is FAO's supreme governing body.
- It determines the policies of the Organization, approves the budget, and makes recommendations to Members on food and agriculture issues.

FAO Strategic Framework 2022-2031:

In this year's Conference, FAO Members will adopt the Strategic Framework 2022-2031.

The Framework aims to support **the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development through the transformation to MORE efficient, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable agri-food systems** for Better Production, Better Nutrition, a Better Environment, and a Better Life, leaving no one behind.

- The "Four Betters" represent an organizing principle for how FAO intends to contribute to **the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, particularly **SDG 1 (no poverty), SDG 2 (zero hunger), and SDG 10 (reduced inequalities)**.

About FAO:

It is a **specialized agency of the United Nations** that leads international efforts to defeat hunger.

Headquarters: Rome, Italy.

Founded: 16 October 1945.

Goal of FAO: Their goal is to achieve food security for all and make sure that people have regular access to enough high-quality food to lead active, healthy lives.

Important reports and Programmes (Have a brief overview):

- Global Report on Food Crises.
- Every two years, FAO publishes **the State of the World's Forests**.
- FAO and the World Health Organization created **the Codex Alimentarius Commission** in 1961 to develop food standards, guidelines and texts.
- In 1996, **FAO organized the World Food Summit**. The Summit concluded with the signing of **the Rome Declaration**, which established the goal of halving the number of people who suffer from hunger by the year 2015.
- In 1997, FAO launched **TeleFood**, a campaign of concerts, sporting events and other activities to harness the power of media, celebrities and concerned citizens to help fight hunger.
- The FAO Goodwill Ambassadors Programme** was initiated in 1999. The main purpose of the programme is to attract public and media attention to the unacceptable situation that some 1 billion people continue to suffer from chronic hunger and malnutrition in a time of unprecedented plenty.
- In 2004 **the Right to Food Guidelines** were adopted, offering guidance to states on how to implement their obligations on the right to food.
- FAO created **the International Plant Protection Convention or IPPC** in 1952.
- FAO is depositary of **the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, also called Plant Treaty, Seed Treaty or ITPGRFA**, entered into force on 29 June 2004.
- The Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) Partnership Initiative** was conceptualized in 2002 during World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Insta Curious:

- Did you know that India released a commemorative coin of Rs. 75 denomination to mark the 75th Anniversary of the FAO (16th October 2020)? [Read Here](#)

2. Do you recall the KISAN RAIL SERVICE of India? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- 1. About FAO, establishment and objectives.
- 2. Important reports and Programmes.

Mains Link:

Write a note on the World Food Programme.

13. ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus (ADMM-Plus):

Context:

The 15th [ASEAN](#) Defence Ministers' Meeting was held recently.

- It is being hosted by Brunei as it is the chair of the ASEAN grouping this year.

About ADMM- Plus:

Consistent with the ADMM guiding principles of open and outward looking, **the 2nd ADMM in Singapore in 2007 adopted the Concept Paper to establish the ADMM-Plus.**

The **ADMM-Plus is a platform for ASEAN and its eight Dialogue Partners** to strengthen security and defence cooperation for peace, stability, and development in the region.

- Eight Dialogue Partners are Australia, China, India, Japan, New Zealand, Republic of Korea, Russia and the USA (collectively referred to as **the “Plus Countries”**).
- It aims to promote mutual trust and confidence between defence establishments through greater dialogue and transparency.

Agreed five areas of practical cooperation under this mechanism are:

- Maritime security, counter-terrorism, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, peacekeeping operations and military medicine.

In 2013, a new priority area of **humanitarian mine action** was agreed.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about SASEAN? [Read here](#) (briefly)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- 1. What is ADMM?
- 2. What is ADMM plus?

- 3. Members.

- 4. Objectives.

- 5. Areas of Cooperation under ADMM- Plus.

14. India completes term as Chair of ILO's Governing Body:

Context:

India's term as chair of **the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation (ILO)** ended recently (October 2020- June 2021).

- Last year, India assumed the chairmanship of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation after a gap of 35 years.

About the Governing Body:

It is the apex executive body of the ILO which decides policies, programmes, agenda, budget and elects the Director-General. It meets in Geneva.

About ILO:

- Established as **an agency for the League of Nations following World War I.**
- Established by [the Treaty of Versailles](#) in 1919.
- It became **the first specialised agency of the United Nations (UN) in the year 1946.**

- It got **the Nobel Peace Prize in 1969**.
- It is **the only tripartite U.N. agency**. It brings together governments, employers and workers.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.

Key reports:

1. World Employment and Social Outlook.
2. Global Wage Report.

Insta Curious:

Did you know that India has ratified six out of eight core/fundamental ILO conventions? Which are the two Conventions that India has not ratified? [Read here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About ILO.
2. Governing Body.

The ILO's fundamental Conventions

These cover subjects considered to be fundamental principles and rights at work:

- Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948
- Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949
- Forced Labour Convention, 1930
- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957
- Minimum Age Convention, 1973
- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999
- Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958

15. Nuclear site images won't be shared with IAEA: Iran:

Context:

Iran's Parliament has said that it will never hand over images from inside of some Iranian nuclear sites to [the International Atomic Energy Agency \(IAEA\)](#) as a monitoring agreement with the agency has expired.

Background:

IAEA and Tehran struck the three-month monitoring agreement in February to cushion the blow of Iran reducing its cooperation with the agency. The agreement was extended by a month on May 24.

Implications/concerns:

- The announcement could further complicate talks between Iran and six major powers on reviving a [2015 nuclear deal](#).

Three years ago, former U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from the pact and reimposed crippling sanctions on Tehran; Iran reacted by violating restrictions.

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.
3. Water Availability Enhancement Project.
4. International Project on Innovative Nuclear Reactors and Fuel Cycles, 2000.

2015 Nuclear Deal:

1. In 2015, Iran with the P5+1 group of world powers - the USA, UK, France, China, Russia, and Germany agreed on a long-term deal on its nuclear programme.
2. The deal was named as Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and in common parlance as Iran Nuclear Deal.
3. Under the deal, Iran agreed to curb its nuclear activity in return for the lifting of sanctions and access to global trade.
4. The agreement allowed Iran to accumulate small amounts of uranium for research but it banned the enrichment of uranium, which is used to make reactor fuel and nuclear weapons.
5. Iran was also required to redesign a heavy-water reactor being built, whose spent fuel could contain plutonium suitable for a bomb and to allow international inspections.

Insta Curious:

Did you know that the global Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and other treaties against the spread of nuclear weapons entrust the IAEA as the nuclear inspectorate? Read more about IAEA Safeguards [here](#).

Do you remember the 123 Agreement and Hyde Act? [Read Here](#) (Briefly)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is IAEA? Relation with the UN.
2. Members of IAEA.
3. Programs of IAEA.
4. Board of Governors- composition, voting and functions.

5. What is Uranium Enrichment?

Mains Link:

Discuss the need for bringing back the Iran nuclear deal.

Link: <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/news/international/nuclear-site-images-wont-be-shared-with-iaea-iran/article35006165.ece/amp/>.

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GENERAL STUDIES – 3

Topics: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

1. What is the IPO Grey Market?

Context:

Paytm's stock has risen from ₹11,500 to ₹21,000 in four days in the grey market.

- This is in response to Paytm's announcement that it will bring an [initial public offer \(IPO\)](#) worth USD 3 billion later this year.

What is an IPO grey market?

Generally, when companies wish to raise funds to fuel their growth, they sell a part of their stock on the stock market. This process is called **an initial public offering, or IPO**.

- But, an IPO grey market is **an unofficial market** where IPO shares or applications are bought and sold **before they become available for trading on the stock market**.
- It is also termed a **parallel market** or **an over-the-counter market**.

Is it legal? How is it governed?

Since it's **unofficial**, inevitably, there are no regulations that govern it. The [Securities and Exchange Board of India \(SEBI\)](#), stock exchanges, and brokers have no part to play in it. These **transactions are undertaken in cash on a one-on-one basis**.

What is the Kostak rate?

It relates to an IPO application. So, **the rate at which an investor buys an IPO application before the listing is termed** the Kostak rate.

Why do investors trade in the Grey Market?

1. It's an excellent opportunity for investors to purchase a company's shares even before they are listed, especially **if they feel that the company's stock will increase in value**.
2. **If an investor has missed the deadline for the IPO application** or wishes to buy more shares then they can approach the IPO grey market.

What is in it for the companies?

- For companies, the grey market is a great way to know how the demand for their shares is and how the company's shares might perform once it is listed.
- Apart from that, an IPO grey market could be used to gauge how the company's stock will perform once it is listed.

Concerns:

The IPO grey market is an unofficial market that performs outside SEBI's purview. Thus, there are no guarantees. All transactions are undertaken on the basis of trust and carry counterparty risk.

Therefore, **there's little legal recourse available to parties if the stock tanks**.

Insta Curious:

Some more terminologies:

1. Do you know what is Black Market is? [Read Here](#)
2. Do you know what Spot Market is? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is an IPO?
2. What are listed companies?
3. What are primary and secondary markets?

4. About Sebi.

Mains Link:

Discuss the Concerns associated with grey markets in India.

Topics: Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

1. National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd. (NARCL):

Context:

Lenders have decided to initially transfer 22 bad loan accounts of ₹89,000 crore to the proposed **National Asset Reconstruction Company Ltd (NARCL)**, aiding the cleanup of their balance sheets.

- The aggregate amount of bad loans likely to be transferred in tranches will be ₹2 trillion.

What is NARCL?

- Setting up of NARCL, **the proposed bad bank for taking over stressed assets of lenders**, was announced in the Budget for 2021-22.
- The plan is to create a bad bank to house bad loans of ₹500 crore and above, in a structure that will contain an **asset reconstruction company (ARC)** and an **asset management company (AMC)** to manage and recover dud assets.
- The new entity is being created in collaboration with both public and private sector banks.

How is NARCL different from existing ARCs? How can it operate differently?

1. **The proposed bad bank will have a public sector character** since the idea is mooted by the government and majority ownership is likely to rest with state-owned banks.
2. At present, **ARCs typically seek a steep discount on loans**. With the proposed bad bank being set up, the valuation issue is unlikely to come up since this is a government initiative.
3. The government-backed ARC will have deep pockets to buy out big accounts and thus free up banks from carrying these accounts on their books.

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 on normal banking activities.

- 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.

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 crores**. The RBI raised this amount to Rs. 100 crores in 2017.
- The ARCs also have to maintain a capital adequacy ratio of 15% of its risk weighted assets.

Need for:

The total stress in the banking system would be in excess of Rs 15 lakh crore. The banks burdened with stressed assets and limited capital will find it difficult to manage the NPAs. There is also limited capital that the government can provide. This is where the bad bank model would step in and help both the government and banks.

Insta Curious:

Do Cooperative Banks come under banking Definition of Banking Regulation (BR) Act, 1949? Does SARFAESI Act apply to Co-operative Banks as well? Read [here](#).

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What are ARCs?
2. What is SARFAESI Act?
3. Sudarshan Sen committee is related to?
4. About NARCL.

Mains Link:

Discuss the roles and functions of ARCs.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G268LAK8R.1&imageview=0>.

2. How Small and Medium Companies will benefit from higher thresholds?

Context:

The **Corporate Affairs Ministry** has expanded the turnover and borrowing thresholds for **Small and Medium sized Companies (SMC)**.

What is the change?

- The Corporate Affairs Ministry has **increased the turnover threshold for SMCs** to Rs 250 crore from Rs 50 crore, and **the borrowing threshold** to Rs 50 crore from Rs 10 crore.
- SMCs are permitted to avail a number of exemptions under **the Company (Accounting Standards) Rules 2021** to reduce the complexity of regulatory filings for smaller firms.

Exceptions:

1. Banks, monetary establishments, insurance coverage firms and listed firms can't be labelled as SMCs.
2. Any firm which is both the holding firm and subsidiary of an organization that's not an SMC can't be labelled as an SMC.

Significance of the move:

The move would promote ease of doing business for the firms that would now be included under the definition of SMC.

What are the exemptions available to SMCs that are not available to other firms?

1. SMCs are completely **exempted from having to file cash flow statements and provide a segmental break up of their financial performance in mandatory filings**.
2. They can also avail **partial reporting exemptions** in areas including reporting on employee benefits obligations such as pensions.
3. They are **exempted from having to provide a detailed analysis of benefit obligations to employees**, but are still required to provide actuarial assumptions used in valuing the company's obligations to employees.
4. SMCs are also allowed to provide an estimated value in use of assets carried on their balance sheets, and are **not required to use present value techniques to arrive at the value in use of assets**.
5. They are also **exempted from having to report** diluted earnings per share in their filings.

Share of MSMEs in India:

- Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) have always played a vital role in the Indian economy.
- Not only do the 6.3 crore MSMEs in India contribute one-third to the GDP of the country but also provide employment to large sections of society.
- Moreover, the sector is a critical source of livelihood and provides nearly 110 million jobs.

Insta Curious:

Do you know that MSMEs are now referred to as Udyam and the registration process as Udyam Registration?

Do you know the basic criteria for MSME classification ? Read [here](#).

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Share of MSME sector in India's GDP and exports.
2. The basic criteria for MSME classification.
3. Classification of MSMEs.
4. What is V- shaped recovery?

5. SDGs on MSMEs.

Mains Link:

What is the potential of India's MSME sector?
Discuss the challenges and concerns associated with the growth of MSME sector in India.

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. Centre announces hike in MSP for paddy, pulses, oilseeds:

Context:

The Central government has hiked [the minimum support price \(MSP\)](#) for common paddy, pulses, oilseeds and coarse cereals.

- The decision was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs recently.

What is MSP?

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:

Concept related to Agriculture & Agroforestry: Do you know what Silvopasture is? [Read Here](#)

4. Who announces MSP?
5. Difference between Kharif and Rabi crops.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Composition of CCEA.
2. What is CACP?
3. How many crops are covered under the MSP scheme?

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G9J8LGOCB.1&imageview=0>

2. What is the Beed model of crop insurance Maharashtra is pushing for?

Context:

Maharashtra government has asked for state-wide implementation of the 'Beed model' of the crop insurance scheme [Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bhima Yojna \(PMFBY\)](#).

What is the 'Beed Model'?

The issue:

- Beed is a district located in the drought-prone Marathwada region.
- The district presents a challenge for any insurance company because farmers here have repeatedly lost crops either to failure of rains or to heavy rains.
- Given the high payouts, insurance companies have sustained losses.

The solution:

To attract the insurance companies, the state Agriculture Department decided to tweak the PMFBY guidelines for the district.

Under the new guidelines, the insurance company provided a cover of 110% of the premium collected, with caveats.

1. **If the compensation exceeded the cover provided**, the state government would pay the bridge amount.
2. **If the compensation was less than the premium collected**, the insurance company would keep 20% of the amount as handling charges and reimburse the rest to the state government.

Effects on the state government:

- In a normal season where farmers report minimal losses, the state government is expected to get back money that can form a corpus to fund the scheme for the following year.
- However, the state government would have to bear the financial liability in case of losses due to extreme weather events.

Why is the government pushing for it for the entire state?

Another source of funds: In the Beed model, the profit of the company is expected to reduce and the state government would access another source of funds.

Reduced burden for state: The reimbursed amount can lead to lower provisioning by the state for the following year, or help in financing the paying the bridge amount in case of a year of crop loss.

About PMFBY:

- Launched in 2016, the flagship PMFBY insures farm losses against inclement weather events.
- Farmers pay 1.5-2% of the premium with the rest borne by the state and central governments.
- It is a central scheme implemented by state agriculture departments as per central guidelines.

PMFBY to PMFBY 2.0:

Completely Voluntary: It has been decided to make enrolment 100% voluntary for all farmers from 2020 Kharif.

Limit to Central Subsidy: The Cabinet has decided to cap the Centre's premium subsidy under these schemes for premium rates up to 30% for unirrigated areas/crops and 25% for irrigated areas/crops.

More Flexibility to States: The government has given the flexibility to states/UTs to implement PMFBY and given them the option to select any number of additional risk covers/features like prevented sowing, localised calamity, mid-season adversity, and post-harvest losses.

Penalising the Pendency: In the revamped PMFBY, a provision has been incorporated wherein if states don't release their share before March 31 for the Kharif season and September 30 for rabi, they would not be allowed to participate in the scheme in subsequent seasons.

Investing in IEC Activities: Insurance companies have to now spend 0.5% of the total premium collected on information, education and communication (IEC) activities.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about Weather based Crop Insurance Scheme (WBCIS)? [Read here,](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Key features of PMFBY.
2. Benefits.
3. Eligibility.
4. PMFBY 2.0.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of PMFBY 2.0.

Link:<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/what-is-the-beed-model-of-crop-insurance-maharashtra-ispushing-for-7353522/lite/>.

3. ‘One Nation One Ration Card’ scheme:

Context:

The Supreme Court has asked the West Bengal government to implement [the One Nation One Ration Card scheme](#) “immediately” to help beneficiaries, especially migrant workers, to avail of subsidised food commodities from anywhere in the country.

- Apart from West Bengal, Assam, Chhattisgarh and Delhi are the other states yet to implement it.

Background:

The court is hearing a **suo motu** (registered on its own motion) case pertaining to “problems and miseries of migrant workers”.

About the scheme:

One Nation One Ration Card (RC) will ensure all beneficiaries, especially migrants can access **PDS** across the nation from any PDS shop of their own choice.

Benefits: no poor person is deprived of getting subsidised foodgrains under the food security scheme when they shift from one place to another. It also removes the chance of anyone holding more than one ration card to avail benefits from different states.

Significance: This will provide freedom to the beneficiaries as they will not be tied to any one PDS shop and reduce their dependence on shop owners and curtail instances of corruption.

Standard format of ‘one nation, one ration card’:

1. For national portability, the state governments have been asked to issue the ration card in bi-lingual format, wherein besides the local language, the other language could be Hindi or English.
2. The states have also been told to have a 10-digit standard ration card number, wherein first two digits will be state code and the next two digits will be running ration card numbers.
3. Besides this, a set of another two digits will be appended with a ration card number to create unique member IDs for each member of the household in a ration card.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about the National Common Mobility Card? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is PDS?
2. What is NFSA? Eligibility? Benefits?
3. How are fair price shops established?
4. Key features of One Nation One Ration Card (RC) scheme.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of One Nation One Ration Card scheme.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GFR8LNF54.1&imageview=0>.

Topics: Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

1. Research Design & Standards Organization (RDSO):

Context:

Indian Railways' **Research Design & Standards Organization (RDSO)** has recently become **the nation's first institution to be declared as Standard Developing Organization (SDO)** under the mission called "**One Nation One Standard**" on Bureau of Indian Standards.

Benefits of this recognition:

1. Larger participation of industry/vendors/technology developers/MSME's in Indian Railways supply chain.
2. The competitiveness amongst the industry will increase.
3. There will be a reduction in cost and quantum improvement in the quality of product and services.
4. There will be smooth induction of latest evolving & emerging technologies on Indian Railways.
5. Dependence on imports will reduce and "Make-in-India" will get a boost.
6. Improved ease-of-doing-business.
7. RDSO will be recognized on international standards-making bodies and there will be integration with global supply chain/global trade.

About the “One Nation One Standard”:

- The mission was envisioned on the line of '**one nation, one ration card' scheme** in order to ensure quality products in the country.
- The purpose is **to converge multiple standards with the BIS** which is a recognised national body for standardisation in India.
- The idea is **to develop one template of standard for one given product** instead of having multiple agencies set it.

Need for:

- The strength and character of a nation is often exemplified by the standards it sets for the quality of its products and services.
- Bringing a national uniformity and standardization in all kinds of public procurement and tendering can be an immediate deliverable.
- The uniform national standards will help in making it mandatory for more products.

Insta Curious:

[Do you know about the One Nation One Ration Card System?](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About BIS.
2. Functions.
3. Overview of BIS Act 2016.

Mains Link:

Discuss the need for 'One Nation One Standard' Mission.

2. Corporatization of ordnance factory board:

Context:

The Union Cabinet has approved a plan to corporatize [the Ordnance Factory Board \(OFB\)](#).

Ordnance Factory Board (OFB):

It is an umbrella body for the ordnance factories and related institutions, and is currently a **subordinate office of the Ministry of Defence (MoD)**.

The first Indian ordnance factory was set up in the year 1712 by the Dutch Company as a Gunpowder Factory, West Bengal.

- OFBs will be responsible for different verticals of the products such as the Ammunition and Explosives group will be engaged in production of ammunition while a Vehicles group will engage in production of defence mobility and combat vehicles.

What Will Change?

According to the plan, the 41 companies will reportedly be grouped under the new entities that will function like any other existing defence public sector undertaking (DPSU) like Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) or Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).

What Necessitated The Restructuring?

As per [Comptroller and Auditor General \(CAG\)](#) report on the ordnance factories:

1. Production in factories continued to fall short of targets and that the various ordnance factories could achieve targets for only 49 per cent of items in 2017-18.
2. A significant quantity of Army's demand for some principal ammunition items remained outstanding as of 31 March 2018 which may adversely affect their operational preparedness.

Thus, inefficiencies in production and delays can be deemed to be a primary reason behind the overhaul of OFB.

Significance of new structure:

1. The restructuring is aimed at transforming the ordnance factories into **productive and profitable assets**, deepen their specialisation in product range, **enhance competitiveness and improve quality and cost-efficiency**.

2. The restructure would **help in overcoming various shortcomings** in the existing system of the OFB by eliminating inefficient supply chains and provide these companies incentive to become competitive and explore new opportunities in the market.
3. It will **allow these companies autonomy as well as help improve accountability and efficiency.**

Concerns/Shortcomings of corporatization:

1. Corporatisation would eventually lead to privatisation.
2. The new corporate entities would not be able to survive the unique market environment of defence products that has very unstable demand and supply dynamics.
3. Restructuring will result in greater autonomy and lesser government control over the corporation but there is a fear of job loss.

Insta Curious:

Do you know the difference between Corporatization and Privatization? [Read Here](#)

3. CCI probes Google for ‘unfair’ business practices:

Context:

The **Competition Commission** has ordered a detailed probe against Google for alleged **anti-competitive practices** in the smart television operating systems market in the country.

What's the issue?

CCI found that Google was dominant in the relevant market for licensable smart TV device operating systems in India. It also said that **prima facie mandatory pre-installation of all the Google applications under Television App Distribution Agreement (TADA)** amounts to imposition of unfair conditions on the smart TV device manufacturers. This is in contravention of **Section 4(2)(a)** of the Competition Act.

- Section 4 of the Act pertains to abuse of dominant position.

About 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 what Tied Selling is? [Read Here](#)

2. Highlights of the Competition Act and amendments to it.
3. About NCLT and its jurisdiction.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About CCI.

Mains Link: Discuss the roles and functions of CCI.

Link: <https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GNS8MTUO6.1&imageview=0>.

Topics: Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

1. Chennai–Kanyakumari Industrial Corridor (CKIC):

Context:

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Government of India have signed a \$484 million loan to improve transport connectivity and facilitate industrial development in the **Chennai–Kanyakumari Industrial Corridor (CKIC)** in the state of Tamil Nadu.

- CKIC is part of India's [East Coast Economic Corridor \(ECEC\)](#), which stretches from West Bengal to Tamil Nadu.

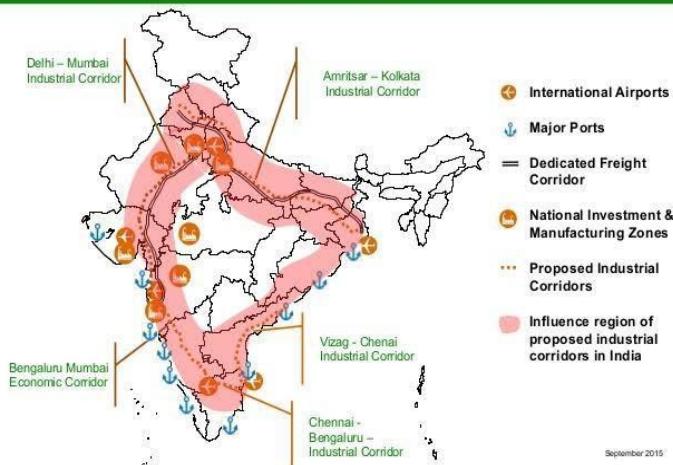
What is an industrial corridor?

- An industrial corridor is basically a corridor consisting of multi-modal transport services that would pass through the states as main arteries.
- Industrial corridors offer effective integration between industry and infrastructure, leading to overall economic and social development.

Industrial corridors constitute world-class infrastructure, such as:

1. High-speed transportation network – rail and road.
2. Ports with state-of-the-art cargo handling equipment.
3. Modern airports.
4. Special economic regions/industrial areas.
5. Logistic parks/transhipment hubs.
6. Knowledge parks focused on catering to industrial needs.
7. Complementary infrastructure such as townships/real estate.

Presence of Industrial & Transport infrastructure



Significance of Industrial corridors:

Enhanced connectivity of industrial hubs with hinterland and ports will particularly help increase the participation of Indian manufacturing in global production networks and global value chains, thereby creating jobs along the corridor.

Following eleven industrial corridor projects have been identified and approved for development by the Government of India:

1. Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC)
2. Chennai Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (CBIC)
3. Extension of CBIC to Kochi via Coimbatore
4. Amritsar Kolkata Industrial Corridor (AKIC)
5. Hyderabad Nagpur Industrial Corridor (HNIC)
6. Hyderabad Warangal Industrial Corridor (HWIC)
7. Hyderabad Bengaluru Industrial Corridor (HBIC)
8. Bengaluru Mumbai Industrial Corridor (BMIC)
9. East Coast Economic Corridor (ECEC) with Vizag Chennai Industrial Corridor (VCIC) as Phase-1
10. Odisha Economic Corridor (OEC)
11. Delhi Nagpur Industrial Corridor (DNIC)

The development of these eleven industrial corridor projects will be implemented through the **National Industrial Corridor Development and Implementation Trust (NICDIT)**.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about National Investment & Manufacturing Zones (NIMZs)? [Read here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Greenfield vs Brownfield projects.
2. What are Industrial Corridors?
3. Features.

Mains Link:

Discuss the need for and significance of Industrial corridors.

2. Inland Vessels Bill:

Context:

The Union Cabinet has given the nod to **the Inland Vessels Bill, 2021**, which will replace **the Inland Vessels Act, 1917**.

- The Bill will regulate safety, security and registration of inland vessels.

Key features of the Bill:

1. It provides for a **unified law for the entire country**, instead of separate rules framed by the States.
2. **The certificate of registration** granted under the proposed law will be deemed to be valid in all States and Union Territories, and there will be no need to seek separate permissions from the States.
3. The Bill provides for a **central database** for recording the details of vessel, vessel registration, crew on an electronic portal.
4. **It requires all mechanically propelled vessels to be mandatorily registered.** All non-mechanically propelled vessels will also have to be enrolled at district, taluk or panchayat or village level.

Inland Water Transport (IWT) in India:

1. India has about 14,500 km of navigable waterways which comprise of rivers, canals, backwaters, creeks, etc.
2. IWT is a fuel-efficient and environment-friendly mode.
3. As per [the National Waterways Act 2016](#), 111 waterways have been declared as National Waterways (NWs).
4. The **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)** is implementing [the Jal Marg Vikas Project \(JMVP\)](#) at an estimated cost of ₹5369.18 crores for capacity augmentation of navigation on the Haldia-Varanasi stretch of Ganga (part of NW-1) with the technical and financial assistance of the World Bank.

Insta Curious:

Do you know what International Waterways are? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Important waterways.
2. Their locations.
3. About JMVP.
4. About IWAI.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of National Waterways.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GCL8M5MIC.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. Chinese 'Artificial Sun' Experimental Fusion Reactor Sets New World Record:

Context:

China's **Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak (EAST)**, also known as 'Artificial Sun' experiment, has set a new record in the latest experiment, where it achieved a plasma temperature of 216 million Fahrenheit (120 million C) for 101 seconds.

Why is this significant?

It is believed that **the temperature at the core of the Sun** is 15 million C, which also means that the temperature produced by (EAST) is **nearly seven times that of the Sun**.

- It is a significant step in the country's quest to unlock clean and limitless energy, with minimal waste products.

What is EAST?

- The mission mimics **the energy generation process of the sun**.
- The reactor consists of **an advanced nuclear fusion experimental research device** located in Hefei, China.
- It is **one of three major domestic tokamaks** that are presently being operated across the country.
- The EAST project is part of **the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER)** facility, which will become **the world's largest nuclear fusion reactor when it becomes operational in 2035**.

The **ITER project** includes the contributions of several countries, including India, South Korea, Japan, Russia and the United States.

How does the 'artificial sun' EAST work?

It **replicates the nuclear fusion process** carried out by the sun and stars.

- For nuclear fusion to occur, tremendous **heat and pressure are applied on hydrogen atoms** so that they fuse together.
- **The nuclei of deuterium and tritium — both found in hydrogen — are made to fuse together to create a helium nucleus, a neutron along with a whole lot of energy.**
- Here, fuel is heated to temperatures of over 150 million degrees C so that **it forms a hot plasma "soup" of subatomic particles**.
- With the help of **a strong magnetic field**, the plasma is kept away from the walls of the reactor to ensure it does not cool down and lose its potential to generate large amounts of energy. The plasma is confined for long durations for fusion to take place.

Why is fusion better than **fission**?

While fission is an easier process to carry out, it **generates far more nuclear waste**.

- Once mastered, **nuclear fusion could potentially provide unlimited clean energy and very low costs**.

Like fission, **fusion also does not emit greenhouse gases** and is considered a safer process with lower risk of accidents.

Which other countries have achieved this feat?

China is not the only country that has achieved high plasma temperatures. In 2020, **South Korea's KSTAR reactor** set a new record by maintaining a plasma temperature of over 100 million degrees Celsius for 20 seconds.

Insta Curious:

[Know about India's Role In World's Largest Nuclear Fusion Project Construction In France:](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is a Tokamak?
2. What is China's EAST?
3. Nuclear fusion vs Fission.
4. Byproducts of fusion and fission.
5. About sun's core.
6. What is ITER?

Mains Link:

Describe the significance of artificial sun being developed by China.

Link:<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-what-is-chinas-artificial-sun-experimental->

2. Rare earth metals at the heart of China-US rivalry

Context: Recent measures of America and other countries to reduce import dependency on China for rare earth minerals

Background

What are rare earth minerals?

- The rare earths minerals (REM) are a **set of seventeen metallic elements**. These include the **fifteen lanthanides on the periodic table in addition to scandium and yttrium** that show similar physical and chemical properties to the lanthanides.
- The REMs have unique **catalytic, metallurgical, nuclear, electrical, magnetic and luminescent properties**. While named ‘rare earth’, they are in fact not that rare and are relatively abundant in the Earth’s crust.

Strategic importance of REM

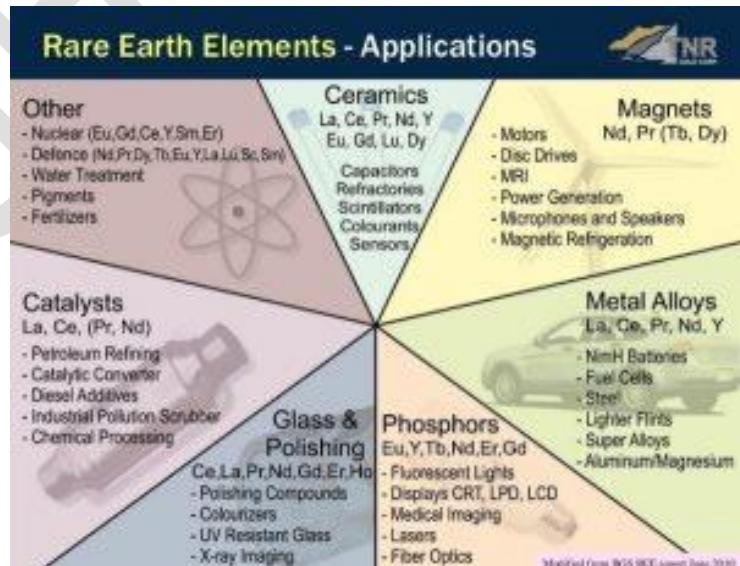
- Its usage range from **daily use** (e.g., lighter flints, glass polishing mediums, car alternators) to **high-end technology** (lasers, magnets, batteries, fibre-optic telecommunication cables).
- Even **futuristic technologies need these REMs** (For example high-temperature superconductivity, safe storage and transport of hydrogen for a post-hydrocarbon economy, environmental global warming and energy efficiency issues).
- Due to their **unique magnetic, luminescent, and electrochemical properties, they help in technologies perform with reduced weight, reduced emissions, and energy consumption**; therefore give them greater efficiency, performance, miniaturization, speed, durability, and thermal stability

Figure: Rare Earth Minerals (REM)

Heavy dependence on China for REM

- In 2019, US imported 80% of its rare earth minerals from China
- European Union (EU) gets 98% of its supply from China
- India** has the **world's fifth-largest reserves of rare earth elements**, nearly twice as much as Australia, but **it imports most of its rare earth needs** in finished form from its geopolitical rival, China

Such high dependence on China might result in creating geopolitical issues for importing countries if China excludes others from accessing these crucial resources.



Some of the actions taken by countries to tackle this situation

- US senate passed a law recently aimed at improving American competitiveness that includes provisions to improve critical minerals supply chain.
- US also aims to boost production and processing of rare earths and lithium, another key mineral component while “working with allies to increase sustainable global supply and reduce reliance on competitors”

What India needs to do?

India has granted government corporations such as Indian Rare Earths Limited (IREL) a monopoly over the primary mineral that contains REEs. However, IREL accounts for only a minuscule fraction of the world's production: only 2265 tonnes of REOs in 2016-17, providing almost no value to domestic manufacturers and consumers, who continued to import finished REE derivatives from China.

Reforms required:

- India must open its rare earth sector up to competition and innovation, and attract the large amounts of capital needed to set up facilities to compete with, and supply to, the world.
- The best move forward might be to create a new Department for Rare Earths (DRE) under the Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas, drawing on its exploration, exploitation, refining, and regulation capabilities.
- This DRE should oversee policy formulation and focus on attracting investment and promoting R&D, with its first move being to allow private sector companies to process beach sand minerals within appropriate environmental safeguards.
- It should also create an autonomous regulator, the Rare Earths Regulatory Authority of India (RRAI), to resolve disputes between companies in this space and check compliance.

InstaCurious

Do you know, protein found in bacteria could extract rare-earth metals more efficiently and with less waste?

[Read Here](#)

Insta links

Prelims links

1. What is REM?
2. Countries with highest production of REM
3. Places where REM is found in India
4. Advantages of REM

Mains links

What is a rare earth mineral? Why is it necessary for India to strategically develop capabilities to increase its production in India? Suggest what reforms India should undertake to achieve this goal

3. India set to launch deep sea mission:

Context:

The Union Cabinet has approved the long pending Deep Ocean Mission.

About the Mission:

The mission proposes to explore the deep ocean similar to the space exploration started by ISRO about 35 years ago.

The focus of the mission will be on deep-sea mining, ocean climate change advisory services, underwater vehicles and underwater robotics related technologies.

- The mission is expected to cost ₹4,077 crore over the next five years.
- **The Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES)** will be the nodal Ministry implementing this multi-institutional mission.

Key Components of the mission:

1. A manned submersible will be developed to carry three people to a depth of 6,000 metres in the ocean with a suite of scientific sensors and tools. An Integrated Mining System will be developed for mining **polymetallic nodules** at those depths in the central Indian Ocean.
2. Development of Ocean Climate Change Advisory Services.
3. Development of a component for searching deep sea flora and fauna, including microbes, and studying ways to sustainably utilise them.
4. The next component is to explore and identify potential sources of hydrothermal minerals that are sources of precious metals formed from the earth's crust along the Indian Ocean mid-oceanic ridges.

5. It has a component for studying and preparing detailed engineering design for offshore **Ocean Thermal Energy Conversion (OTEC)** powered desalination plants.
6. The final component is aimed at grooming experts in the field of ocean biology and engineering. This component aims to translate research into industrial applications and product development through on-site business incubator facilities.

Significance:

- The mission will give a boost to efforts to explore India's vast Exclusive Economic Zone and Continental Shelf.
- The plan will enable India to develop capabilities to exploit resources in **the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB)**.

Potential:

India has been allotted 75,000 square kilometres in the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB) by UN International Sea Bed Authority for exploration of poly-metallic nodules.

- **CIOB reserves contain** deposits of metals like iron, manganese, nickel and cobalt.
- It is envisaged that **10% of recovery of that large reserve can meet the energy requirement of India for the next 100 years.**

What are PMN?

Polymetallic nodules (also known as **manganese nodules**) are potato-shaped, largely porous nodules found in abundance carpeting the sea floor of world oceans in deep sea.

Composition: Besides manganese and iron, they contain nickel, copper, cobalt, lead, molybdenum, cadmium, vanadium, titanium, of which nickel, cobalt and copper are considered to be of economic and strategic importance.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about Hydrothermal vents? [Read Here](#)

Can sea-floor hydrothermal vents pump out rare-earth elements dissolved in their hot fluids? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is deep sea mining?
2. What are PMNs?
3. Location of the Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB).

4. Functions of the UN International Sea Bed Authority.

Mains Link:

Discuss the need for and significance of 'Deep Ocean Mission' to be launched by India.

Link: <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/news/national/government-approves-proposal-to-roll-out-project-to-explore-deep-ocean-for-resources/article34830803.ece/amp/>.

4. Neutrinos:

Context:

Scientists have shown that **the geometry of space-time can cause neutrinos to oscillate.**

(**Note:** Technical details related are not that important; however, you need to know about Neutrinos and their features.)

What are neutrinos?

Detected for the first time in 1959, neutrinos are **the second most abundant particles in the world**, after photons, or the light particle.

Neutrinos are **mysterious particles, produced copiously in nuclear reactions in the Sun, stars, and elsewhere.** They also "oscillate"-- meaning that different types of neutrinos change into one another.

- Probing of oscillations of neutrinos and their relations with mass are crucial in studying the origin of the universe.

Sources:

Neutrinos are created by various radioactive decays; during a supernova, by cosmic rays striking atoms etc.

Features of neutrinos:

1. Neutrinos **interact very weakly with everything else** – trillions of them pass through every human being every second without anyone noticing.
2. A neutrino's spin always points in the opposite direction of its motion.
3. It is now generally believed that the phenomenon of neutrino oscillations requires **neutrinos to have tiny masses**.

Insta Curious:

Can you name some of the major neutrino observatories/experiments of the world? [Read Here](#)

2. Features.

3. Neutrinos vs Photons.

What are fermions?

InstaLinks:**Prelims Link:**

1. What are neutrinos?

5. Statistics day:

Context:

Celebrated on **29th June every year**.

- Observed in recognition of the notable contributions made by Late **Professor Prasanta Chandra Mahalanobis** in the fields of statistics, statistical system and economic planning.

Theme:

The theme of Statistics Day, 2021 is **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG)- 2** (End Hunger, Achieve Food Security and Improved Nutrition and Promote Sustainable Agriculture).

Contribution of PC Mahalanobis to Statistics (1893 –1972):

1. He is referred to as the chief architect of Indian statistical system as well as father of statistical science in India.
2. He established the Indian Statistical Institute (ISI) in 1931 in Kolkata. The institute founded the journal **Sankhya**, along the lines of Karl Pearson's Biometrika. In 1959 it was made an autonomous body of Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation.
3. He also helped in the establishment of Central Statistical Organisation (CSO), the National Sample Survey (NSS) and the Annual Survey of Industries (ASI).
4. He introduced three key concepts to the theory and practice of sample surveys which are: **Pilot surveys, Optimum survey design and Inter Penetrating Network of sub-samples technique (IPNS)**.
5. In 1936 he introduced a statistical measure named the **Mahalanobis distance**. It is widely used in cluster analysis and classification techniques.
6. The **Mahalanobis model**, was employed in the Second Five Year Plan, which worked towards the rapid industrialisation of India.

Insta Curious:

[Do you know about the mechanical tool built by Mahalanobis known as the photographic profiloscope to accurately measure people's facial features?](#)

InstaLinks:**Prelims Link:**

1. About Statistics Day.
2. About PC Mahalanobis.
3. About ISI and CSO.
4. What is Inter Penetrating Network of sub-samples technique (IPNS)?
5. What is the Mahalanobis distance?

6. Cyber Capabilities and National Power Report: IISS:

Context:

The report was recently released by [the International Institute for Strategic Studies \(IISS\)](#).

- The report analyses the cyber ecosystem of each state and how it intersects with international security, economic competition and military affairs.

The countries are assessed in seven categories:

1. Strategy and doctrine.
2. Governance, command and control.
3. Core cyber-intelligence capability.
4. Cyber empowerment and dependence.
5. Cyber security and resilience.
6. Global leadership in cyberspace affairs.
7. Offensive cyber capability.

The report has divided the countries into three tiers of cyber power:

1. **First Tier:** States with world-leading strengths across all the categories in the methodology. The United States of America is the only country in this tier.
2. **Second Tier:** States that have world-leading strengths in some of the categories. Australia, Canada, China, France, Israel, Russia and the United Kingdom are in this tier.
3. **Third Tier:** States that have strengths or potential strengths in some of the categories but significant weaknesses in others. **India**, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, North Korea and Vietnam are in this tier.

Highlights of the report:

1. **The US is the only top-tier cyber power** because of its increased risk of ransomware attacks carried out by hackers.
2. **The US was the only country in the top tier in terms of cyber security** because of its unparalleled digital-industrial base, its cryptographic expertise and the ability to execute “sophisticated, surgical” cyber strikes against adversaries.
3. **China**, which falls under **the second-tier countries**, is at least a decade behind the US when it comes to cyber power.

India Specific Observations:

1. Despite the geo-strategic instability of its region and a keen awareness of the cyber threat it faces, **India has made only “modest progress” in developing its policy and doctrine for cyberspace security**.
2. The military confrontation with China in the disputed Ladakh border area in June 2020, followed by a sharp increase in Chinese activity against Indian networks, has heightened Indian concerns about cyber security, not least in systems supplied by China.
3. India is currently aiming to compensate for its weaknesses by building new capability with the help of key international partners – including the US, the UK and France – and by looking to concerted international action to develop norms of restraint.
4. India’s approach towards institutional reform of cyber governance has been “slow and incremental”, with key coordinating authorities for cyber security in the civil and military domains established only as late as 2018 and 2019 respectively.

Way ahead for India:

India’s “best chance” of moving up to the second tier of cyber powers is “by harnessing its great digital-industrial potential and adopting a whole-of-society approach to improving its cyber security.”

Insta Curious:

Do you know what MITM attack mean? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims and Mains Links:

Key findings, concerns and performance of India.

Link: <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-has-made-only-modest-progress-in-developing-cyber-security-doctrine/article35021210.ece/amp/>.

Topics: Awareness in space.

1. NASA announces two new missions to Venus:

Context:

The last US probe to visit the planet was the Magellan orbiter in 1990.

Now, [NASA](#) has announced two new missions to Venus. These two sister missions both aim to understand how Venus became an inferno-like world, capable of melting lead at the surface. These include:

1. **Davinci+:**

The **Davinci+ (Deep Atmosphere Venus Investigation of Noble gases, Chemistry, and Imaging) mission** will:

- Measure the planet's atmosphere to gain insight into how it formed and evolved.
- Determine whether Venus ever had an ocean.
- Return the first high resolution images of the planet's "tesserae" geological features (These features could be comparable to continents on Earth).

2. **Veritas (Venus Emissivity, Radio Science, InSAR, Topography, and Spectroscopy):**

This mission will map the planet's surface to understand its geological history and investigate how it developed so differently than Earth.

- It will use a form of radar to chart surface elevations and discover whether volcanoes and earthquakes are still happening.

About Venus:

- Venus is the second planet from the sun and the hottest planet in the solar system with a surface temperature of 500C - high enough to melt lead.
- The planet's thick atmosphere has cranked the surface pressure up to 90 bars.
- A single Venusian rotation takes 243.0226 Earth days. That means a day lasts longer than a year on Venus, which makes a complete orbit around the sun in 225 Earth days.
- The Venusian planetary core has a diameter of about 4,360 miles (7,000 km), comparable to Earth's core.
- Venus is one of just two planets that rotate from east to west. Only Venus and Uranus have this "backwards" rotation.

Historic missions to Venus:

1. [Magellan](#) - a Nasa mission that ended in 1994.
2. [Venus Express](#)- A European mission- focused on atmospheric science.
3. [Akatsuki](#)- Japanese spacecraft- focused on atmospheric science.

Future missions:

The European Space Agency (Esa) is evaluating a Venus mission, called **EnVision**, alongside two astronomy proposals - **Theseus and Spica**. Other concepts are also being proposed to Nasa.

Insta Curious:

1. Did you know that it was the Soviet Union that started missions to Venus in the 1960s? [Read here](#),
2. Do you know, astronomers are considering an extraordinary possibility of life floating in the clouds of Venus? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Key facts related to Venus.
2. Why is it called earth's twin?
3. About the latest missions announced by NASA.
4. Previous historic missions.
5. Venus vs Earth- comparison.

Mains Link:

Discuss why NASA's latest missions to Venus are significant.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G748KVCCP.1&imageview=0>.

2. Why is NASA sending water bears, baby squid to the International Space Station?

Context:

Nasa has sent glow-in-the-dark **baby squids** and about 5,000 **tardigrades**, also called **water bears**, to the International Space Station.

- They were part of the 22nd SpaceX cargo resupply mission.

Objectives of these new experiments:

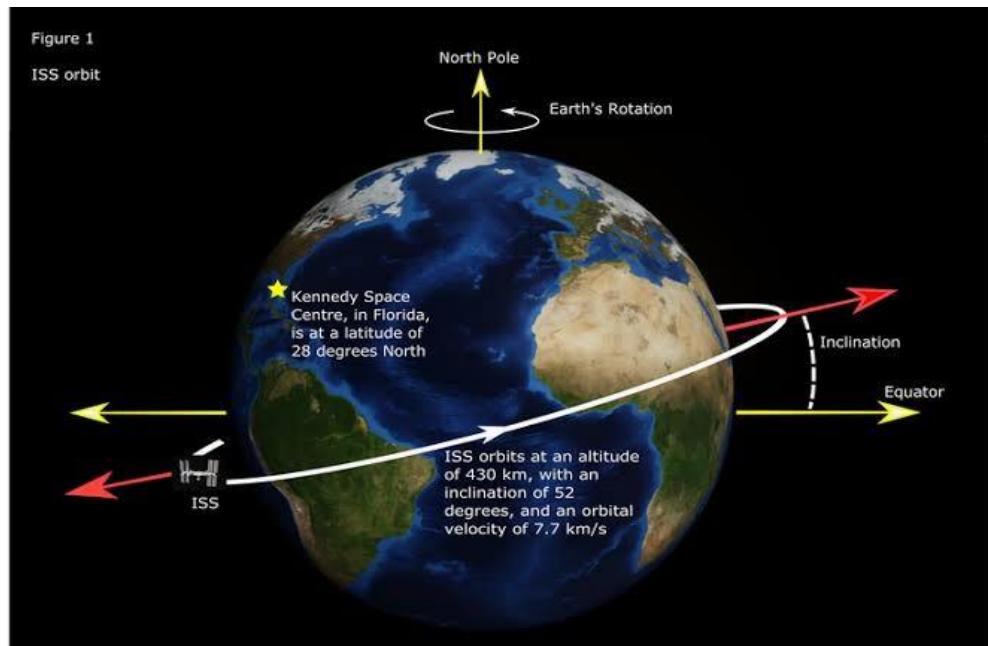
1. To help scientists design improved protective measures for astronauts going on long-duration space travel.
2. To understand how beneficial microbes interact with animals, potentially leading to breakthroughs in improving human health on Earth.

Why send microbes?

Microbes play a crucial role in the normal development of animal tissues and in maintaining human health, and the research will allow scientists to have a better

understanding of how beneficial microbes interact with animals when there is a lack of gravity.

- In the human body, microorganisms contribute to a variety of functions, including digestion, developing the immune system and detoxifying harmful chemicals. A disruption in our relationship with these microbes can lead to disease.



What is the International Space Station?

- A space station is essentially a large spacecraft that remains in low-earth orbit for extended periods of time.
- The ISS has been in space since 1998.
- It is a result of cooperation between the five participating space agencies that run it: NASA (United States), Roscosmos (Russia), JAXA (Japan), ESA (Europe), and CSA (Canada).
- The ISS circles the Earth in roughly 93 minutes, completing 15.5 orbits per day.

Insta Curious:

Did you know ISS is the ninth space station to be inhabited by crews, following the Soviet and later Russian Salyut, Almaz, and Mir stations as well as Skylab from the US. [Read here](#),

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About the ISS.
2. Countries involved.
3. Objectives.
4. Previous space stations.
5. Other space stations.

Mains Link:

Write a note on the International Space Station.

Link:<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-why-nasa-is-sending-water-bears-and-baby-squid-to-the-international-space-station-7337170/>.

3. European Space Agency's EnVision mission to Venus:

Context:

European Space Agency (ESA) has announced that it has selected [EnVision](#) as its next orbiter that will visit Venus sometime in the 2030s.

What is EnVision?

1. EnVision is an ESA led mission with contributions from NASA.
2. It will be launched on an Ariane 6 rocket, the spacecraft will take about 15 months to reach Venus and will take 16 more months to achieve orbit circularisation.
3. **Objectives:** To study the planet's atmosphere and surface, monitor trace gases in the atmosphere and analyse its surface composition. A radar provided by NASA will help to image and map the surface.

Other missions to Venus:

1. NASA recently selected two missions to the planet Venus- [DAVINCI+ and VERITAS](#).
2. Previously, an ESA-led mission to Venus called '[Venus Express](#)' (2005-2014) focussed on atmospheric research and pointed to volcanic hotspots on the planet's surface.
3. The first spacecraft to Venus was **the Soviet Union's Venera series, followed by NASA's Magellan Mission that studied Venus from 1990-1994.**
4. As of now, **Japan's Akatsuki mission** is studying the planet from Orbit.

Why are scientists interested in studying Venus?

Earth and Venus have evolved so differently from each other even though they are roughly of the same size and composition. Venus is the hottest planet in the solar system because of the heat that is trapped by its thick cloud cover.

With such missions, scientists seek to address the following questions:

1. What history did Venus experience to arrive at this state and does this foretell Earth's fate should it, too, undergo a catastrophic greenhouse effect?
2. Is Venus still geologically active?
3. Could it have once hosted an ocean and even sustained life?
4. What lessons can be learned about the evolution of terrestrial planets in general, as we discover more Earth-like exoplanets?

About Venus:

- For those on Earth, Venus is the second-brightest object in the sky after the moon.
- It appears bright because of its thick cloud cover that reflects and scatters light.
- It is the second closest planet to the Sun.
- It is called the Earth's twin because of their similar sizes.

How is Venus different from Earth?

1. Venus' thick atmosphere traps heat and is the reason that it is the hottest planet in the solar system, despite coming after Mercury, the closest planet to the Sun. Surface temperatures on Venus can go up to 471 degrees Celsius, which is hot enough to melt lead.
2. Venus moves forward on its orbit around the Sun but spins backwards around its axis slowly. This means on Venus the Sun rises in the west and sets in the East.
3. Venus also does not have a moon and no rings.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about Atmospheric super-rotation? [Read Here](#)

3. About the latest missions announced by NASA.
4. Previous historic missions.
5. Venus vs Earth- comparison.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Key facts related to Venus.
2. Why is it called earth's twin?

Mains Link: Discuss why NASA's latest missions to Venus are significant.

Link:<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-european-space-agencys-envision-mission-to-venus-7354821/lite/>.

4. What is the New Shepard rocket system?

Context:

Amazon founder and billionaire Jeff Bezos's space company called **Blue Origin** recently concluded the online auction for the first seat on **New Shepard**, a rocket system meant to take tourists to space.

- The winning bidder will get to fly aboard New Shepard along with Bezos and his brother, when it takes its **first human flight on July 20**, which marks [the 52nd anniversary of Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin's moon landing](#).

Background:

Over 7,600 people registered from 159 countries to bid for this seat, which ultimately went for a winning bid of \$28 million.

What is New Shepard, the rocket system?

- It is a rocket system **meant to take tourists to space successfully**.
- The system is built by **Blue Origin**.
- New Shepard has been named after astronaut **Alan Shephard, the first American to go to space**.
- It offers flights to space over 100 km above the Earth** and accommodation for payloads.
- The system is a fully reusable, vertical takeoff and vertical landing space vehicle.

Scientific objectives of the mission:

It is a rocket system that has been designed to take astronauts and research payloads past **the Karman line** – the internationally recognised boundary of space.

- The idea is to provide easier and more cost-effective access to space meant for purposes such as academic research, corporate technology development and entrepreneurial ventures among others.

Insta Curious:

There's also Commercial Crew, the agency's solution to end reliance on Russian Soyuz spacecraft to send astronauts to the space station. [Read more about this,](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- About New Shepherd Rocket system.
- Objectives.
- Significance.
- What is Karman Line?

Link:<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-what-is-new-shepard-the-rocket-system-designed-to-provide-cost-effective-access-to-space-7358063/lite/>.

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.

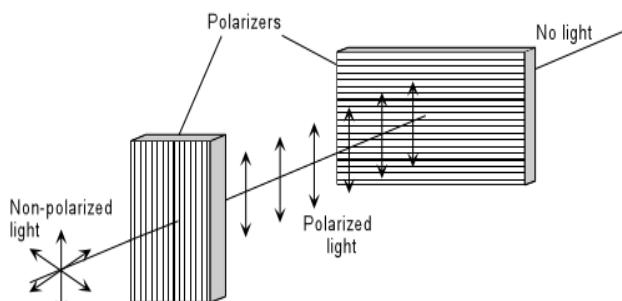
- Scientists aim **to study the polarisation** in the light coming from millions of stars.

Background:

Polarization is a property of light that represents the direction that the light wave oscillates.

How will the survey be carried out?

- 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.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is polarization?
2. About PASIPHAE.
3. About GAIA Satellite.

Link:

<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-how-pasiphae-will-peep-into-the-unknown-regions-of-the-sky-7357628/lite/>.

6. Three Chinese astronauts enter space station after successful docking operation:

Context:

Shenzhou-12 manned spaceship has successfully docked with China's space station core module **Tianhe** and entered the orbital capsule.

About China's Space Station:

- The new multi-module **Tiangong station** is set to be operational for at least 10 years.
- **Tianhe** is one of three main components of what would be China's first self-developed space station, rivalling the only other station in service – the ISS.
- The space station will **operate in low-Earth orbit** at an altitude of 340-450 km above Earth's surface.

Significance of the space station:

1. The low orbit space station would be the country's eye from the sky, providing round the clock bird's-eye view for its astronauts on the rest of the world.
2. It shall aid China's aim to become a major space power by 2030.

Concerns:

China's space station will be equipped with a **robotic-arm** over which the US has raised concerns for its possible military applications.

- The Concern is that this technology "could be used in a future system for grappling other satellites".

Other space stations:

- The only space station currently in orbit is [the International Space Station \(ISS\)](#). The ISS is backed by the United States, Russia, Europe, Japan and Canada.
- So far, **China has sent two previous space stations into orbit- the Tiangong-1 and Tiangong-2 were trial stations**.
- India is planning to launch its own space station by 2030.

Insta Curious:

What is Molniya orbit? [Read Here](#) (Briefly)

InstaLinks:**Prelims Link:**

1. About ISS.
2. Countries involved.
3. Objectives.

4. Previous space stations.

Mains Link:

Write a note on the International Space Station.

7. Hubble Space Telescope:

Context:

Nasa reports trouble with [the Hubble Space Telescope](#). The telescope has been down for the past few days. The problem is a payload computer that has stopped working.

Background:

The payload computer's purpose is to control and coordinate the science instruments and monitor them for health and safety purposes.

About the Hubble Space Telescope:

1. The Hubble Space Telescope is a large telescope in space. NASA launched Hubble in 1990.
2. It was built by the United States space agency NASA, with contributions from the European Space Agency.
3. Hubble is the only telescope designed to be serviced in space by astronauts.
4. Expanding the frontiers of the visible Universe, the Hubble Space Telescope looks deep into space with cameras that can see across the entire optical spectrum from infrared to ultraviolet.
5. **The Hubble Space Telescope makes one orbit around Earth every 95 minutes.**

**Achievements:**

1. It has helped in discovering the moons around Pluto.
2. Evidence regarding the existence of black holes has emerged based on the observations through Hubble.
3. The birth of stars through turbulent clouds of gas and dust have also been observed.
4. The hubble telescope made observations of six galaxies merging together.
5. On February 11, 2021, the Hubble made observations of small concentrations of black holes.

Insta Curious:

1. [Do you know the Difference between Hubble's Telescope and James Webb Telescope?](#)
2. Do you know about AstroSat? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:**Prelims Link:**

1. About the Hubble Space Telescope.
2. About James Webb Telescope.
3. What is a black hole?

Link: https://m.timesofindia.com/world/us/nasa-reports-trouble-with-hubble-space-telescope/amp_articleshow/83658697.cms.

8. Chandrayaan-2:

Context:

[Chandrayaan-2](#), hovering over the Moon, has found new developments on the hot outermost layer of the bright star known as Corona. These include:

1. Abundances of magnesium, aluminium and silicon in the solar corona.
2. Around 100 microflares were observed, providing new insights about coronal mass heating.

Reasons behind coronal heating problem:

The corona emits **ultraviolet, X-rays and consists of ionised gas at temperatures exceeding 2 million degrees Fahrenheit**, while just 1,000 miles below, the surface known as the **photosphere** simmers at just 10,000 degrees Fahrenheit. This mysterious difference in temperatures is called the **coronal heating problem**.

- As per the latest findings, the high temperatures could be due to strong **magnetic fields present above the Sunspots (dark patches seen in visible images of the Sun)**.

Chandrayaan-2 Mission:

The Chandrayaan-2 mission, which was lost after it **hard landed on the dark side of the Moon** in 2019, remains active in the form of its orbiter hovering over the Moon.

Scientists used **the Solar X-ray Monitor (XSM)** onboard Chandrayaan-2 in September 2019 to study the Sun.

- The primary objective of Chandrayaan 2 was to demonstrate the ability to soft-land on the lunar surface and operate a robotic rover on the surface.
- The mission consisted of **an Orbiter of the Moon, Vikram (after Vikram Sarabhai) - the lander and Pragyan (wisdom) - the rover**, all equipped with scientific instruments to study the moon.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about Solar Prominence? [Read Here](#)

2. Objectives.

3. Instruments onboard.

4. Chandrayaan-1.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- About Chandrayaan-2.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of Chandrayaan-2 mission.

Link: <https://www.indiatoday.in/amp/science/story/isro-chandrayaan-2-corona-ejection-moon-solar-probe-1818522-2021-06-23>.

Topics: Awareness in the fields of IT, Computers, robotics, nano-technology, bio-technology and issues relating to intellectual property rights.

1. 5G technology:

Context:

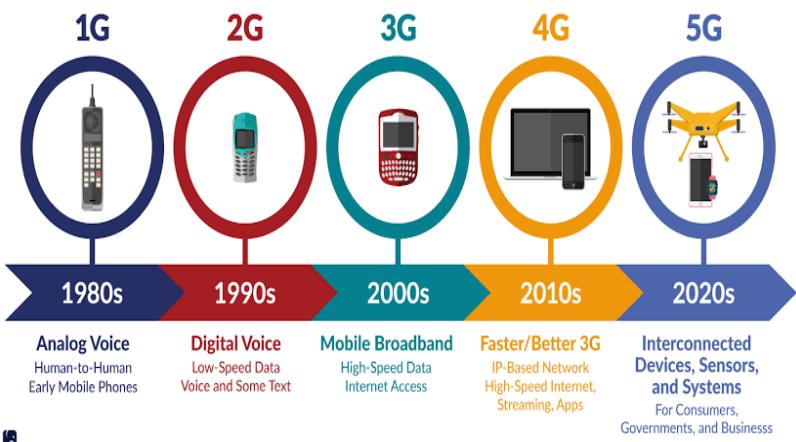
Bollywood actor Juhi Chawla has moved the Delhi High Court seeking a **scientific study on any adverse effects of radio-frequency radiation emitted by cellular telecommunications using 5G technology** on 'health, life, organ or limb of adult or child, or to flora and fauna' before its official rollout in the country.

What is 5G?

- 5G is the next generation of mobile broadband that will eventually replace, or at least augment 4G LTE connection.

Features and benefits of the 5G technology:

- Operate in the **millimeter wave spectrum (30-300 GHz)** which have the advantage of sending large amounts of data at very high speeds.
- Operate in **3 bands**, namely low, mid and high frequency spectrum.
- Reduced latency** will support new applications that leverage the power of 5G, the Internet of Things (IoT), and artificial intelligence.
- Increased capacity** on 5G networks can minimize the impact of load spikes, like those that take place during sporting events and news events.



Significance of the technology:

India's **National Digital Communications Policy 2018** highlights the importance of 5G when it states that the convergence of a cluster of revolutionary technologies including 5G, the cloud, Internet of Things (IoT) and data analytics, along with a growing start-up community, promise to accelerate and deepen its digital engagement, opening up a new horizon of opportunities.

What are the potential health risks from 5G?

To date, and after much research performed, **no adverse health effect has been causally linked with exposure to wireless technologies.**

- **Tissue heating** is the main mechanism of interaction between radiofrequency fields and the human body. Radiofrequency exposure levels from current technologies result in **negligible temperature rise in the human body**.
- **As the frequency increases, there is less penetration into the body tissues** and absorption of the energy becomes more confined to the surface of the body (skin and eye).

Provided that the overall exposure remains below international guidelines, **no consequences for public health are anticipated.**

What are the international exposure guidelines?

Two international bodies produce exposure guidelines on electromagnetic fields. Many countries currently adhere to the guidelines recommended by:

1. The International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection.
2. The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, through the International Committee on Electromagnetic Safety.

These guidelines are not technology-specific. They cover radiofrequencies up to 300 GHz, including the frequencies under discussion for 5G.

International efforts- International Electromagnetic Fields (EMF) Project:

WHO established the International Electromagnetic Fields (EMF) Project in 1996. The project investigates the health impact of exposure to electric and magnetic fields in the frequency range 0-300 GHz and advises national authorities on EMF radiation protection.

Insta Curious:

Is India prepared for roll-out of 5G? [Read here,](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is 5G?
2. Differences between 3G, 4G and 5G.
3. Applications.
4. What is a spectrum?
5. About EMF Project.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of 5G technology.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GFV8KM7L9.1&imageview=0>.

2. Internet through LEO satellites:

Context:

OneWeb, which is a [**Low Earth Orbit \(LEO\)**](#) satellite communications operator, has launched its next batch of 36 satellites from Russia.

With the latest launch, OneWeb's total in-orbit constellation stands at 218 satellites. These would be a part of **OneWeb's 648 LEO satellite fleet.**

About [OneWeb's LEO internet programme:](#)

- 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?

- LEO satellites are positioned around 500km-2000km from earth, compared to stationary orbit satellites which are approximately 36,000km away.
- As LEO satellites orbit closer to the earth, they are able to provide stronger signals and faster speeds than traditional fixed-satellite systems.
- 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:

- 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.
- Complicated regulatory framework:**
- Stakeholders in these companies are from various countries. Thus it becomes challenging to receive requisite licences to operate in each country.
- 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.
- Satellites travelling at a lower orbit can also **interrupt the frequency of those orbiting above them.**
- 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:

How many types of orbit do you know? [Check out here,](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- About LEO.
- Starlink project.
- Benefits of LEO satellite based internet.

Mains Link:

Discuss the Concerns associated with satellite based internet services.

Link:<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/oneweb-satellites-starlink-project-kuiper-7341366/>.

3. Legalisation of Bitcoin in El Salvador:

Context:

El Salvador, a small **coastal country in Central America**, has become **the first in the world to make Bitcoin legal.**

Rationale behind this move:

1. El Salvador depends heavily on remittances sent by Salvadorians from abroad (making up more than 20% of the GDP). However, much of this is lost to intermediaries. By using Bitcoin, the amount received by more than a million low income families will increase in the equivalent of billions of dollars every year.
2. Besides, Bitcoin will help increase financial inclusion in El Salvador, where 70% of the population does not have a bank account and relies on the informal economy.

Please note:

El Salvador has not had its own monetary policy since 2001, when a right-wing government made the US dollar the official currency. Along with Ecuador and Panama, El Salvador is currently among three nations in Latin America to have a 'dollarized economy'.



Criticisms of the move:

Legalizing bitcoin in the absence of a central regulating authority will have potential for fraud and money laundering, high energy costs and extreme volatility.

Is there a move to adopt virtual currencies globally?

In many parts of the world that are plagued by economic uncertainties, the use of cryptocurrencies is fast gathering pace, such as in **Cuba, Venezuela and Mexico**, where many are preferring virtual tokens that are decentralised and unregulated.

How such legalisation may not work well for India?

El Salvador has no monetary policy of its own and hence, no local currency to protect. It runs on the monetary policy of the US Federal Reserve. Therefore, any changes in Federal Reserve policies will definitely affect the Country. Hence, it is looking at such alternatives.

- But, this is not the case with India. India has its own currency and a central bank. Therefore, coexistence of bitcoin and rupee side by side becomes difficult.

India's response to Cryptocurrencies:

In India, the government has floated [The Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021](#), which will prohibit all private cryptocurrencies and lay down the regulatory framework for the launch of an "official digital currency".

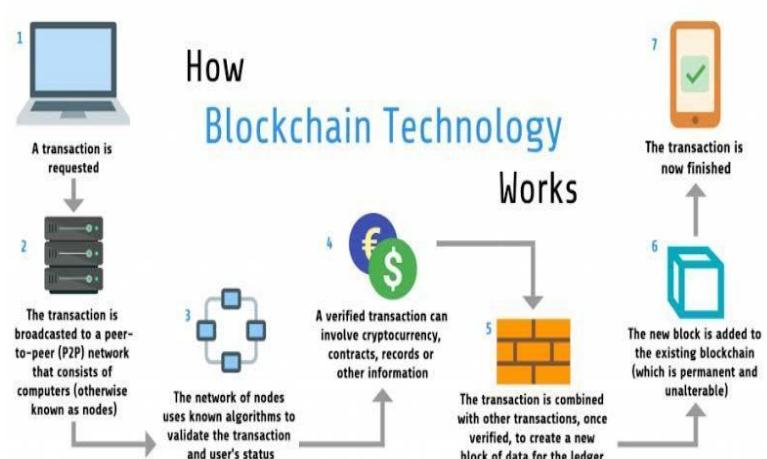
- It was to be introduced in Parliament's Budget session earlier this year, but was held up as the government continues discussions with stakeholders.

Conclusion:

Overall takeaway for India from the El Salvador case-

This might become an example of how far countries are willing to go to attract innovators and entrepreneurs working on this emerging sector. This is the wealth that India has in spades and has barely protected with policy.

While deliberations continue in India on the monetary and financial regulations around cryptocurrency, it is important that **attention be paid to incentives for India's developers working on key innovations in the space**.



Insta Curious:

1. Do you know what Bitcoin Maximalism is? [Read Here](#)
2. Do you know what IOTA Tangle is? [Read here](#) (briefly)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Various cryptocurrencies.
2. Cryptocurrencies launched by various countries.
3. What is Blockchain technology?

Mains Link:

What are Cryptocurrencies? Why there is a need for regulation? Discuss.

Link: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/el-salvador-bitcoin-president-nayib-7348198/lite/>.

4. CHIME telescope yields unprecedented results:

Context:

Scientists with **the Canadian Hydrogen Intensity Mapping Experiment (CHIME)** Collaboration have assembled the largest collection of **fast radio bursts (FRBs)** in the telescope's first FRB catalogue.

Why is this significant?

While catching sight of an FRB is considered a rare thing in the field of radio astronomy, prior to the CHIME project, radio astronomers had only caught sight of around 140 bursts in their scopes since the first FRB was spotted in 2007.

What are FRBs?

- FRBs are oddly bright flashes of light, registering in the radio band of the electromagnetic spectrum, which blaze for a few milliseconds before vanishing without a trace.
- These brief and mysterious beacons have been spotted in various and distant parts of the universe, as well as in our own galaxy.
- Their origins are unknown and their appearance is highly unpredictable.

About the CHIME project:

1. It is a large stationary radio telescope in British Columbia, Canada.
2. The telescope receives radio signals each day from half of the sky as the Earth rotates.
3. The telescope has no moving parts and observes half of the sky each day as the Earth turns.
4. CHIME is a partnership between the University of British Columbia, McGill University, the University of Toronto and the Canadian National Research Council's Dominion Radio Astrophysical Observatory.

Insta Curious:

What is the Square Kilometre Array Project? [Read here](#)

InstaLinks:**Prelims Link:**

1. What are radio waves?
2. What is electromagnetic spectrum?
3. What are Magnetars?
4. What is a neutron star?

Mains Link:

Write a note on FRBs.

Link:<https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/chime-telescope-yields-unprecedented-results/article34782271.ece/amp/>.

5. India and Pakistan's battle over basmati:

Context:

India, the world's largest exporter of basmati rice, has applied for **protected geographical indication (PGI) status** from the European Union's **Council on Quality Schemes for Agricultural Products and Foodstuffs**. This would give it sole ownership of the basmati title in the EU.

What's the issue now?

Pakistan, which is the only other basmati rice exporter in the world, has opposed this move as it would adversely impact its own exports, especially as the EU is a major market for its basmati.

What has happened?

Pakistan enacted the Geographical Indications (Registration and Protection) Act in March 2020, which gives it the right to oppose Indian application for registration of Basmati rice exclusive rights.

While India has said that it is an Indian-origin product in its application, published in the EU's official journal on September 11.

- As per the EU's official journal, any country can oppose the application for registration of a name pursuant to Article 50(2) (a) of Regulations (EU) of the European Parliament and of the Council on quality schemes for agricultural products and foodstuffs within three month from the date of publication.

Background:

In May 2010, GI status was given to basmati grown in Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Uttrakhand and parts of western Uttar Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir.

About GI tag:

A GI is primarily an agricultural, natural or a manufactured product (handicrafts and industrial goods) originating from a definite geographical territory.

- Typically, such a name conveys an assurance of quality and distinctiveness, which is essentially attributable to the place of its origin.

What are the benefits?

Once the GI protection is granted, no other producer can misuse the name to market similar products. It also provides comfort to customers about the authenticity of that product.

Who is a registered proprietor of a geographical indication?

- Any association of persons, producers, organisation or authority established by or under the law can be a registered proprietor.
- Their name should be entered in the Register of Geographical Indication as registered proprietor for the Geographical Indication applied for.

How long is the registration of Geographical Indication valid?

- The registration of a geographical indication is valid for a period of 10 years.
- It can be renewed from time to time for a further period of 10 years each.

Who accords and regulates Geographical Indications?

At the International level: Geographical Indications are covered as a component of intellectual property rights (IPRs) under [the Paris Convention for the Protection of Industrial Property](#). GI is also governed by [the World Trade Organisation's \(WTO's\) Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights \(TRIPS\)](#).

In India, Geographical Indications registration is administered by [the Geographical Indications of Goods \(Registration and Protection\) Act, 1999](#) which came into force with effect from September 2003. The first product in India to be accorded with GI tag was Darjeeling tea in the year 2004-05.

Insta Curious:

[Did you know that Basmati has also been grown for centuries in the Kalar tract, which lies between the Ravi and Chenab rivers in Pakistan's Punjab province?](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- What is a GI tag?
- Who grants?
- GI products in India and their geographical locations.
- Other IPRs.

Link: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-india-and-pakistans-battle-over-basmati-7357044/lite/>.

- What is the EU? Various institutions under it.

Mains Link: What is a Geographical Indication (GI) tag? Discuss its significance.

6. Monoclonal antibodies:

Context:

An experimental monoclonal antibody cocktail, **REGEN-COV2**, has been found to be a life-saving treatment for some of the most severely affected Covid-19 patients, results of a clinical trial in the UK have shown.

- However, Such therapies are expensive because they are difficult to make and take a lot of time.

What are Monoclonal antibodies?

They are **artificially created antibodies** that aim to aid the body's natural immune system.

They target a specific antigen — a protein from the pathogen that induces immune response.

How are they created?

Monoclonal antibodies can be created in the lab **by exposing white blood cells to a particular antigen**.

To increase the quantity of antibodies produced, a single white blood cell is cloned, which in turn is used to create identical copies of the antibodies.

- In the case of Covid-19, scientists usually work with the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which facilitates the entry of the virus into the host cell.

Need for monoclonal antibodies:

In a healthy body, the immune system is able to create antibodies — tiny Y-shaped proteins in our blood that recognise microbial enemies and bind to them, signalling the immune system to then launch an attack on the pathogen.

However, **for people whose immune systems are unable to make sufficient amounts of these antibodies**, scientists provide a helping hand- using monoclonal antibodies.

History:

The idea of delivering antibodies to treat a disease dates as far back as the 1900s, when Nobel-prize winning German immunologist **Paul Ehrlich** proposed the idea of a '**Zauberkugel**' (magic bullet), a compound which selectively targets a pathogen.

- From then, it took eight decades of research to finally arrive at Muromonab-CD3, the world's first monoclonal antibody to be approved for clinical use in humans.
- **Muromonab-CD3** is an immunosuppressant drug given to reduce acute rejection in patients with organ transplants.

Applications:

Monoclonal antibodies are now relatively common. They are used in treating Ebola, HIV, psoriasis etc.

Insta Curious:

Did you know about Polyclonal antibodies? [Find out more about them](#)

Do you know what immunomodulators are? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What are antibodies?
2. What are monoclonal antibodies?
3. How are they created?
4. Applications.
5. Antigens vs antibodies.

Mains Link:

What are monoclonal antibodies? Why are they significant? Discuss.

Link:<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-monoclonal-antibodies-covid-7368039/lite/>

7. Sale of illegal HTBt cotton seeds doubles:

Context:

Industry lobbies have written to the Agriculture Ministry, demanding that action be taken to stop illegal sales of **HTBt cotton** and punish offenders, noting that cultivation of the genetically modified cotton variant has serious environmental and economic consequences.

What's the issue?

The illegal cultivation of herbicide-tolerant (HT) Bt cotton has seen a huge jump this year, with seed manufacturers claiming that the sale of illegal seed packets has more than doubled from 30 lakh last year to 75 lakh this year.

What is allowed?

Bt cotton remains the only GM crop allowed to be cultivated in the country.

Developed by US giant **Bayer-Monsanto**, it involves insertion of two genes viz '**Cry1Ab**' and '**Cry2Bc**' from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* into cotton seeds.

- This modification codes the plant to produce protein toxic to **Heliothis bollworm (pink bollworm)** thus making it resistant to their attack. The commercial release of this hybrid was sanctioned by the government in 2002.

What is HTBt Cotton?

This variety (HtBt) involves the addition of another gene, '**Cp4-Epsps**' from another soil bacterium, **Agrobacterium tumefaciens**. Farmers claim that the HtBt variety can withstand the spray of glyphosate, a herbicide that is used to remove weeds, and thus it substantially saves them de-weeding costs.

Issues with HTBt Cotton:

Farmers are at risk because there is no accountability of the quality of seed, it pollutes the environment, the industry is losing legitimate seed sale and the government also loses revenue in terms of tax collection.

What the law says?

- Legally, sale, storage, transportation and usage of unapproved GM seeds is a punishable offence under the **Rules of Environmental Protection Act 1989**. Also, sale of unapproved seeds can attract action under the **Seed Act of 1966** and the **Cotton Act of 1957**.
- The **Environmental Protection Act** provides for a jail term of five years and a fine of Rs 1 lakh for violation of its provisions, and cases can be filed under the other two Acts.

Insta Curious:

Do you know what Somaclonal Variation is? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About BT Cotton.
2. What is HTBt Cotton?
3. What is GEAC?
4. The Rules of Environmental Protection Act 1989.
5. The Seed Act of 1966.

6. The Cotton Act of 1957.

Mains Link:

Discuss the functions of GEAC.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GI68MBS10.1&imageview=0>

8. What is gain of function?

Context:

The term '**gain of function research**' has recently cropped up in the debate about the origins of the Covid-19 pandemic.

What is Gain-of-function Research?

- 'Gain of function' is a field of research focused on growing generations of microorganisms, under conditions that cause mutations in a virus.
- These experiments are termed 'gain of function' because they involve manipulating pathogens in a way that they gain an advantage in or through a function, such as increased transmissibility.
- Such experiments allow scientists to better predict emerging infectious diseases, and to develop vaccines and therapeutics.

How is it carried out?

Gain of function research may use **genetic engineering** or **serial passaging**.

1. **Genetic engineering** involves 'editing' the genetic code to modify the virus in a way predetermined by the scientists.
2. **Serial passaging** involves allowing the pathogen to grow under different circumstances and then observing the changes.

Issues related to the research:

1. Gain-of-function research involves **manipulations that make certain pathogenic microbes more deadly or more transmissible**.
2. There is also '**loss-of-function**' research, which involves inactivating mutations, resulting in a significant loss of original function, or no function to the pathogen.
3. Gain-of-function research reportedly carries **inherent biosafety and biosecurity risks** and is thus referred to as 'dual-use research of concern' (DURC).

Serial passaging involves allowing the pathogen to grow under different circumstances and then observing the changes.

Relevance to Covid-19 pandemic:

- The discussion around gain of function research came back to focus recently, after a report argued that the possibility of the virus accidentally leaking out of the Wuhan Institute of Virology could not be entirely dismissed.
- While scientists had earlier ruled out the possibility of the virus being 'genetically engineered', a recent report said **serial passaging** may have led to the evolution of the virus during an ongoing gain of function research project in the Chinese city.

How is it regulated in India?

All activities related to genetically engineered organisms or cells and hazardous microorganisms and products are regulated as per the "**Manufacture, Use, Import, Export and Storage of Hazardous Microorganisms/Genetically Engineered Organisms or Cells Rules, 1989**".

- In 2020, the Department of Biotechnology issued guidelines for the establishment of containment facilities, called '**Biosafety labs**'.
- The notification provides operational guidance on the containment of biohazards and levels of biosafety that all institutions involved in research, development and handling of these microorganisms must comply with.

Insta Curious:

Do you know the difference between forward genetics and reverse genetics? [Read Briefly](#)

Do you know what Gene Knockout is? [Read Here](#) (Briefly)

Link: <https://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/science/explained-what-is-gain-of-function-research/article34861204.ece>.

9. US' Digital Millennium Copyright Act:

Context:

The Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology was locked out of his Twitter account for an hour allegedly over a notice received for violation of the **US' Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) 1998**.

What is the Digital Millennium Copyright Act?

It is a law passed in the US and is among the world's first laws **recognising Intellectual Property (IP) on the internet**.

- The DMCA oversees the implementation of two 1996 treaties signed by [World Intellectual Property Organisation \(WIPO\)](#) member nations- [the Copyright Treaty](#) and [the Performances and Phonograms Treaty](#).

- Both the treaties require member nations and signatories to provide in their respective jurisdictions, protection to IP that may have been created by citizens of different nations who are also co-signatories to the treaty.
- It also obligates that signatories to the treaty ensure ways to prevent circumvention of the technical measures used to protect copyrighted work.
- It also provides the necessary international legal protection to digital content.

Who can generate a DMCA notice and how are they sent to companies or websites?

- Any content creator of any form, who believes that their original content has been copied by user or a website without authorisation can file an application citing their intellectual property has been stolen or violated.
- In the case of social media intermediaries like Facebook, Instagram or Twitter, content creators can directly approach the platform with a proof of them being original creators.
- Since these companies operate in nations which are signatories to the WIPO treaty, they are obligated to remove the said content if they receive a valid and legal DMCA takedown notice.

What is WIPO and how does it ensure protection of content on the internet?

- The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is one of the 17 specialized agencies of the United Nations.
- It was created in 1967 “to encourage creative activity, to promote the protection of intellectual property throughout the world.”
- As of date, 193 nations across the world, including India, are members of WIPO.

Intellectual Property:

- It is a category of property that includes intangible creations of the human intellect, and primarily encompasses copyrights, patents and trademarks.
- It also includes other types of rights, such as trade secrets, publicity rights, moral rights, and rights against unfair competition.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about Data Exclusivity & TRIPS Plus? [Read Here](#)

4. What is compulsory Licensing?

5. About DMCA.

6. About WIPO Treaties.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- What is TRIPS?
- Indian Patents Act, 2005.
- Patent regime in India.

Mains Link:

Write a note on compulsory Licensing.

Link: <https://www.google.com/amp/s/indianexpress.com/article/explained/digital-millennium-copyright-act-notices-twitter-ravi-shankar-prasad-7377932/lite/>.

Topics: Conservation related issues, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

1. Eighth Global Nitrogen Conference:

Context:

The **8th International Nitrogen Initiative Conference (INI2020)** was scheduled to convene in Berlin, Germany, from 3-7 May 2020. But, due to the pandemic it was cancelled last year and was held recently- virtually.

About the International Nitrogen Initiative Conference:

- Set up in **2003** under sponsorship of the **Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE)** and from **the International Geosphere-Biosphere Program (IGBP)**.
- It is **a triennial event** that brings together scientists from around the world dealing with reactive nitrogen compounds in agriculture, industry, traffic, soil, water and air.

- **Objective:** To stimulate an exchange among policymakers and other relevant stakeholders of results, ideas and visions to improve future **holistic management of reactive nitrogen**.
- The program is currently a sustained partner of [Future Earth](#).

Nitrogen as an essential nutrient:

- Nitrogen, which is a **vital macronutrient for most plants**, is the most abundant element in the atmosphere.
- A little over 78% of dry air on Earth is nitrogen. But **atmospheric nitrogen, or dinitrogen, is unreactive and cannot be utilised by plants directly**.
- Therefore, **nitrogen-fixing bacteria like rhizobia** live symbiotically with leguminous plants, providing nitrogen to the plant and soil in the form of reactive compounds like ammonia and nitrate.

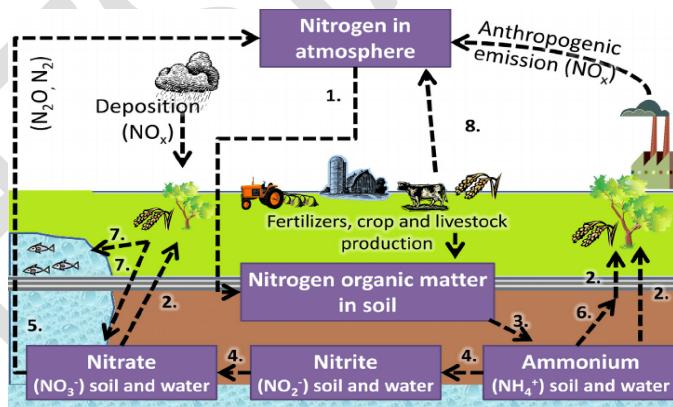
How Nitrogen turned into pollutants from nutrients and how it is affecting health and environment?

- Nitrogen compounds **running off farmland** have led to water pollution problems around the world, while **nitrogen emissions from industry, agriculture and vehicles** make a big contribution to air pollution.
- **Over 80% of the nitrogen in soil is not utilised by humans.** While over four-fifths of the nitrogen is used to feed livestock, only about six per cent reaches humans in case of non-vegetarian diet, as compared to the 20% that reaches the plate of a vegetarian.

Therefore, Nitrogen becomes a pollutant when it escapes into the environment and reacts with other organic compounds. It is either released into the atmosphere, gets dissolved in water sources such as rivers, lakes or groundwater, or remains in the soil.

Nitrogen pollution has a significant impact on the environment:

1. **It creates harmful algal blooms and dead zones in our waterways** and oceans; the algae produce toxins which are harmful to human and aquatic organisms (and indirectly affects fisheries and biodiversity in coastal areas).
2. **Contamination of drinking water:** 10 million people in Europe are potentially exposed to drinking water with nitrate concentrations above recommended levels. This can have an adverse effect on human health.
3. **Food Security:** Excessive nitrogen fertiliser application contributes to soil nutrient depletion. As the world needs to feed an ever growing population, loss of arable land is a major global problem.
4. The release of **Nitrous Oxide** is essentially a greenhouse gas which is harmful to the environment.



Insta Curious:

Do you know what the Haber-Bosch process is? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is an inert gas?
2. About Nitrogen and its key properties.
3. How nitrous oxide is formed?
4. What are algal blooms?

5. About INI 2020.

6. What is Future Earth?

Mains Link:

Write a note on nitrogen pollution.

2. Sri Lanka braces for oil spill from sinking cargo vessel:

Context:

Singapore-registered MV X-Press Pearl, carrying chemicals and plastic, has been in news since a fire incident on May 20 and subsequent explosion aboard, following which tonnes of plastic pellet deposits were found deposited along Sri Lanka's beaches.

Preparedness:

The country's **Marine Environment Protection Authority (MEPA)**, which termed the incident one of Sri Lanka's worst ecological disasters in history, has readied **oil spill containment booms**, to tackle a possible leak from the vessel that officials said carried 350 tonnes of oil in its fuel tanks.

What is an oil spill?

OECD defines an oil spill as oil, discharged accidentally or intentionally, that floats on the surface of water bodies as a discrete mass and is carried by the wind, currents and tides.

- Oil spills can pollute land, air, or water, though it is mostly used for oceanic oil spills.

Effects of oil spills:

Ecosystem Destruction: Oil spills can have a major impact on the temporary animal and fish loss of habitat.

Heavy oils may affect several organism functions like respiration, feeding, and **thermo-regulation**.

It can affect living beings in case of direct contact with the environment polluted with spilled oil components (some of which may persist a long time), such as drinking polluted water or breathing polluted dust particles.

Effects on flora: If the oil washes into coastal marshes, mangrove forests, or other wetlands, fibrous plants and grasses absorb oil, which can damage plants and make the area unsuitable as wildlife habitat.

On Marine Organisms: Oil spills frequently kill marine mammals such as whales, dolphins, seals, and sea otters.

On Birds: Oil spills also damage nesting grounds, potentially causing serious long-term effects on entire species.

Effects of oil spills on economy:

On Economy:

1. If beaches and populated shorelines are fouled, tourism and commerce may be severely affected.
2. The power plants and other utilities that depend on drawing or discharging sea water are severely affected by oil spills.
3. Major oil spills are frequently followed by the immediate suspension of commercial fishing.

Methods through which oil spill can be cleaned:

Containment Booms: Floating barriers, called booms are used to restrict the spread of oil and to allow for its recovery, removal, or dispersal.

Skimmers: are devices used for physically separating spilled oil from the water's surface.

Sorbents: Various sorbents (e.g., straw, volcanic ash, and shavings of polyester-derived plastic) that absorb the oil from the water are used.

Dispersing agents: These are chemicals that contain surfactants, or compounds that act to break liquid substances such as oil into small droplets. They accelerate its natural dispersion into the sea.

Bio-agents: Nutrients, enzymes, or microorganisms such as Alcanivorax bacteria or Methylocella silvestris that increase the rate at which natural biodegradation of oil occurs are added.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about the largest marine oil spill in history, Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill? [Read Here](#)

Link: <https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G748KVCCR.1&imageview=0>.

3. Anti-hail gun test by Himachal Pradesh:

Context:

To help out horticulturists who face crop damage due to hailstorms, the Himachal Pradesh government will be testing the use of indigenously developed '**anti-hail guns**'.

Firstly, what is hail?

Hail is produced by **cumulonimbus clouds**, which are generally large and dark and may cause thunder and lightning.

- In such clouds, winds can blow up the water droplets to heights where they freeze into ice. The frozen droplets begin to fall but are soon pushed back up by the winds and more droplets freeze onto them, resulting in multiple layers of ice on the hailstones.
- This fall and rise is repeated several times, till the hailstones become too heavy and fall down.

What are 'anti-hail guns'?

- An anti-hail gun is a **machine which generates shock waves to disrupt the growth of hailstones in clouds.**
- It comprises a tall, fixed structure somewhat resembling an inverted tower, several metres high, with a long and narrow cone opening towards the sky.
- The gun is “fired” by feeding **an explosive mixture of acetylene gas and air** into its lower chamber, which releases a shock wave (waves which travel faster than the speed of sound, such as those produced by supersonic aircraft).
- These shock waves supposedly **stop water droplets in clouds from turning into hailstones, so that they fall simply as raindrops.**

But, what is the need? Why is hail a big issue in HP?

Every summer from March to May, frequent hailstorms in the fruit-growing areas of Himachal destroy apples, pears and other crops, causing massive losses to farmers. In some hail-prone areas such as Narkanda and Theog, the entire apple crop in an orchard may sometimes get destroyed during such storms.

Insta Curious:

Did you know that Cumulus clouds have the highest liquid water concentrations of any clouds in their upper portions where the moist air has been lifted the highest? [Read here,](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Operating mechanism of anti-hail guns.
2. Conditions favorable for the formation of hailstorm.
3. What are cumulonimbus clouds?

4. Apple growing regions in the country.

Link:<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/anti-hail-guns-himachal-pradesh-hailstorms-crop-damage-7344802/lite/>.

4. Strong policies on black carbon can sharply cut glacier melt: World Bank study:

Context:

The world Bank had recently conducted a research study on impact of Black Carbon over [the Himalaya, Karakoram and Hindu Kush \(HKHK\) mountain ranges](#), where glaciers are melting faster than the global average ice mass.

- The report is titled “Glaciers of the Himalayas, Climate Change, Black Carbon and Regional Resilience”.

Key findings:

- **Black carbon (BC)** deposits produced by human activity accelerate **the pace of glacier and snow melt in the Himalayan region.**
- The rate of retreat of HKHK glaciers is estimated to be 0.3 metres per year in the west to 1.0 metre per year in the east. BC adds to the impact of climate change.
- Deposits of BC act in two ways hastening the pace of glacier melt: by **decreasing surface reflectance of sunlight and by raising air temperature.**

Suggestions:

1. **Full implementation of current policies** to mitigate BC can achieve a 23% reduction but enacting new policies and incorporating them through regional cooperation among countries can achieve enhanced benefits.
2. The rate of retreat can be sharply reduced through new, currently feasible policies by an **additional 50% from current levels.**

- Specifically, in the Himalayas, reducing black carbon emissions from cookstoves, diesel engines, and open burning would have the greatest impact and could significantly reduce **radiative forcing**.

About Black Carbon:

- BC is a short-lived pollutant that is the second-largest contributor to warming the planet behind carbon dioxide (CO₂).
- Unlike other greenhouse gas emissions, BC is quickly washed out and can be eliminated from the atmosphere if emissions stop.
- Unlike historical carbon emissions, it is also a localised source with greater local impact.
- It is **formed through the incomplete combustion** of fossil fuels, biofuel, and biomass, and is emitted in both anthropogenic and naturally occurring soot.

Sources of black carbon in HKHK regions:

Industry [primarily brick kilns] and residential burning of solid fuel together account for 45–66% of regional anthropogenic [man-made] BC deposition, followed by on-road diesel fuels (7–18%) and open burning (less than 3% in all seasons)" in the region.

Insta Curious:

[See what the Climate and Clean Air Coalition has to say on black carbon:](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- What are Tarballs?
- Differences between black carbon and brown carbon.
- Sources.
- Impacts.

Mains Link:

Examine the impact of Increased percentage of Tarballs on Himalayas.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=G748KVD1A.1&imageview=0>

5. What is the 'sea snot' outbreak in Turkey?

Context:

Turkey's Sea of Marmara, that connects the Black Sea to the Aegean Sea, has witnessed the largest outbreak of 'sea snot'.

The sludge has also been spotted in the adjoining **Black and Aegean seas**.



What is sea snot?

- It is a **slimy layer of grey or green sludge**, which can cause considerable damage to the marine ecosystem.
- It is **formed when algae are overloaded with nutrients**.
- A 'sea snot' outbreak was **first recorded in the country in 2007**. Back then, it was also spotted in the Aegean Sea near Greece.

Overloading of nutrients happens because of warm weather caused by global warming, water pollution, uncontrolled dumping of household and industrial waste into the seas etc.

What are the impacts? Concerns?

- It has spread through the sea south of Istanbul and also **blanketed harbours and shorelines**.
- It is posing a severe **threat to the marine ecosystem of the country**- it has caused mass deaths among the fish population, and also killed other aquatic organisms such as corals and sponges.
- If unchecked, this can collapse to the bottom and cover the sea floor, causing major damage to the marine ecosystem.
- Over a period of time, it could end up poisoning all aquatic life, including fishes, crabs, oysters, mussels and sea stars.
- Besides aquatic life, the 'sea snot' outbreak has also affected the livelihoods of fishermen.
- It can also cause **an outbreak of water-borne diseases** such as cholera in cities like Istanbul.

Steps taken by Turkey to contain its spread:

1. Turkey has decided to declare the entire Sea of Marmara as a protected area.
2. Steps are being taken to reduce pollution and improve treatment of waste water from coastal cities and ships.
3. A disaster management plan is being prepared.

Insta Curious:

Did you know that Not all algal blooms are harmful, some can actually be beneficial. [Read here,](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is a sea snot?
2. What are algal blooms?
3. About Black Sea.
4. About Aegean Sea.
5. Where is sea of Marmara?

Mains Link:

Discuss the issues associated with the formation of sea snots.

Link:<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-what-is-the-sea-snot-outbreak-in-turkey-7347989/lite/>.

6. Haryana's "Pran Vayu Devta Pension Scheme", and Oxy Van (Oxygen Forests):

Context:

These schemes were announced by **Haryana Government** on the occasion of World Environment Day.

What is the Pran Vayu Devta Pension Scheme (PVDPS)?

- It is an initiative **to honour all those trees which are of the age of 75 years and above** and have served humanity throughout their life by producing oxygen, reducing pollution, providing shade and so on.
- Such trees will be identified throughout the state and **these will be looked after by involving local people in this scheme.**
- For maintenance of trees older than 75 years, a "**pension amount**" of **Rs 2,500 would be given per year in the name of PVDPS.** This 'tree pension' shall continue to increase every year, on lines similar to the Old Age Samman Pension Scheme in the state.
- The pension shall be given by the Urban Local Bodies department for the upkeep of the trees, installing plates, grilles etc.

What is an Oxy Van (Oxygen Forest)?

- Oxy Van are identified pieces of land, on which as many as 3 crore trees would be planted.
- The Oxy Vans will occupy 10 per cent of the 8 lakh hectares of land across Haryana.
- These van will house different varieties of plants and trees.

Insta Curious:

Do you know what Clonal Forestry is? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About Oxy Vans.
2. About PVDPS.
3. Key features of these schemes.
4. How is oxygen produced by plants?

Mains Link:

Discuss the need for and significance of these schemes.

Link: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/what-is-haryana-cms-scheme-for-pension-for-trees-oxygen-forests-to-avoid-shortages-in-future-7345557/>.

7. Maharashtra govt's proposed amendment for protection of 'heritage trees':

Context:

The Maharashtra government has proposed amendments to **the Maharashtra (Urban Areas) Protection and Preservation of Trees Act of 1975**, to introduce provisions for the protection of 'heritage trees'.

What are heritage trees?

A tree with an estimated age of 50 years or more shall be defined as a heritage tree. It may belong to specific species, which will be notified from time to time.

Why was the concept of heritage tree introduced?

1. A heritage tree will get special protection. **Compensatory plantation**— anyone cutting a heritage tree will need to plant trees in the same numbers as the cut tree's age.
2. The organization planting the compensation trees will also have **to ensure the survival of the plantation for seven years and geo-tag the trees**.
3. In case compensatory plantation is not possible, **the tree feller has to pay compensation for the economic valuation of the trees being felled**.

Tree Authority:

1. As per amendments, tree Authority will be formed in local civic bodies and councils which will take all decisions regarding the protection of trees.
2. It will have to ensure tree census to be carried out every five years along with counting of heritage trees.
3. The Tree Authority is tasked with "increasing the tree cover in urban areas and protecting the existing ones."
4. A proposal to cut more than 200 trees of age 5 years or more, will be referred to the state tree authority.

Insta Curious:

Can you recollect the natural sites of India being recognized as the World Heritage Sites? [Check Here](#)

Link: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-maharashtra-govts-proposed-amendment-for-protection-of-heritage-trees-7354594/lite/>.

8. High-Level Dialogue on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought (DLDD):

Context:

High-Level Dialogue on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought (DLDD) was convened recently with the support of [the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification \(UNCCD\)](#) to assess the progress made in fighting land degradation, and map the way forward on global efforts to revive and restore healthy land.

- PM Modi is the President of the 14th Session of the Conference of Parties of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

Need for a healthy land:

Land is the foundation of our societies and is a cornerstone to global food security and environmental health, zero hunger, poverty eradication and affordable energy. It underpins the success of **the entire 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.

Challenges:

- Globally, one fifth of earth's land area – more than 2 billion hectares – is degraded, including more than half of all agricultural land.
- Unless we change how we manage soil, over 90% could become degraded by 2050.

- Land degradation negatively impacts one fifth of the planet's land area and the livelihoods of 3.2 billion people, 40% of the global population.
- It accelerates climate change and biodiversity loss, and contributes to droughts, wildfires, involuntary migration and the emergence of zoonotic infectious diseases.

About UNCCD:

- Established in 1994.
- It is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management.
- It is the only convention stemming from a direct recommendation of the Rio Conference's Agenda 21.
- **Focus areas:** The Convention addresses specifically the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, known as the drylands, where some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and peoples can be found.

Insta Curious:

Did you know that to help publicise the Convention, 2006 was declared "International Year of Deserts and Desertification"?

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About UNCCD.
2. Objectives.
3. Functions.

Mains Link:

Differentiate between land degradation and desertification? Discuss impact of desertification on ecology.

9. Children and Digital Dumpsites report:

Context:

The new report, titled **Children and Digital Dumpsites**, was recently released by the WHO.

Key findings:

- More than **18 million children** and adolescents working at e-waste dumpsites in low- and middle-income countries are potentially at the risk of severe health hazards.
- They face risk due to discarded **electronic devices or e-waste being dumped from high-income countries**.

What are the Concerns?

e-waste contains over 1,000 precious metals and other substances like gold, copper, mercury and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons.

1. The processing is done in low-income countries, which do not have proper safeguarding regulation and which makes the process even more dangerous.
2. Children are especially preferred at these dumpsites because of their small and dexterous hands.
3. Several women, including expectant mothers, also work there. Processing e-waste exposes them as well as their children to these toxins, which can lead to premature births and stillbirth.
4. The hazardous impact of working at such sites is also experienced by families and communities that reside in the vicinity of these e-waste dumpsites.

Volume of water generated across the world:

The volume of e-waste generated is surging rapidly across the globe. About 53.6 million tonnes of e-waste was generated in 2019.

- Only 17.4 per cent of this e-waste was processed in formal recycling facilities. The rest of it was dumped in low- or middle-income countries for illegal processing by informal workers.
- This is likely to increase in the coming years because of the rise in the number of smartphones and computers.

What actually constitutes e-waste?

E-Waste is short for **Electronic-Waste** and the term is used to describe old, end-of-life or discarded electronic appliances. It **includes their components, consumables, parts and spares.**

Management of e-waste in India:

Laws to manage e-waste have been in place in India since 2011, mandating that only authorised dismantlers and recyclers collect e-waste. [**E-waste \(Management\) Rules, 2016**](#) was enacted in 2017.

E-waste Generation in India:

According to the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), India generated more than 10 lakh tonnes of e-waste in 2019-20, an increase from 7 lakh tonnes in 2017-18. Against this, the e-waste dismantling capacity has not been increased from 7.82 lakh tonnes since 2017-18.

Insta Curious:

Do you know the difference between Brown Goods and White Goods? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is e-waste?
2. E-waste (Management) Rules, 2016.
3. About the Basel Convention.
4. Other Conventions related to e waste management.

Mains Link:

Write a note on e-waste management in India.

Link:

<https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/health/overt-18-million-kids-at-e-waste-dumpsites-face-threat-of-health-hazards-who-77504>.

10. Barrier to cyclone storms: Odisha plans to plant mangroves along its coast:

Context:

The Odisha government has proposed to raise **mangrove and casuarinas plantation in the coastal belt.**

- Previously, the mangroves served as a natural barrier to cyclonic winds in Bhitarkanika National Park during [Cyclone Yaas](#).

Background:

Odisha is vulnerable to various natural disasters like cyclone, flood, hailstorm, drought due to its unique geo-climatic condition.

What are Mangroves?

Mangroves occur worldwide in the tropics and subtropics, mainly between latitudes 30° N and 30° S, with the greatest mangrove area with 5° of the equator.

- A mangrove is a **shrub or small tree** that grows in coastal saline or brackish water.
- Mangroves are **salt-tolerant trees**, also called **halophytes**, and are adapted to live in harsh coastal conditions.
- They contain a complex salt filtration system and complex root system to cope with salt water immersion and wave action.
- They have blind roots which are called **Pneumatophores**. These roots help these trees to respire in anaerobic soils.
- The seeds of Mangrove Forests trees germinate in the trees itself before falling – This is called **Viviparity mode of reproduction.**

Importance of Mangroves:

1. Mangrove roots help to impede water flow and thereby enhance the deposition of sediment in areas (where it is already occurring), stabilise the coastal shores, provide a breeding ground for fishes.
2. Mangroves moderate monsoonal tidal floods and reduce inundation of coastal lowlands.
3. They prevent coastal soil erosion.
4. They protect coastal lands from tsunami, hurricanes and floods.
5. Mangroves enhance the natural recycling of nutrients.

6. Mangrove supports numerous floras, avifauna and wildlife.
7. Provide a safe and favourable environment for breeding, spawning, rearing of several fishes.
8. They supply woods, firewood, medicinal plants and edible plants to local people.
9. They provide numerous employment opportunities to local communities and augments their livelihood.

Additional information:

On World Environment Day, Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced that 50 million mangroves would be planted in the Sundarbans in the near future.

- The mega mangrove plantation drive was taken up mainly to compensate for the plants' loss during Cyclone Amphan.

Insta Curious:

Have you heard about Black , Red and White Mangroves? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About Mangroves.
2. Conditions for their growth.
3. Features.

4. Mangroves in India and the world.

5. Benefits of Mangroves.

Mains Link:

Discuss the significance of Mangroves.

11. Summit on Green Hydrogen Initiatives:

Context:

India is hosting a summit on **Green Hydrogen initiatives** involving the BRICS nations. The event offers a platform to share their respective **Green Hydrogen initiatives** and views on how to take it to the next level in their own countries.

- The event will be anchored by NTPC Ltd , a Maharatna CPSU under the Ministry of Power.

What is green hydrogen?

Hydrogen when produced by electrolysis using renewable energy is known as Green Hydrogen which has no carbon footprint.

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.

Insta Curious:

Do you know the differences between Green, Blue and Grey Hydrogen? [Read Here](#) (You can directly check Page 5)

12. UNESCO to downgrade status of Great Barrier Reef; Australia blames political interference:

Context:

The [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation committee](#) has recommended that [the Great Barrier Reef](#) should be added to a list of “in danger” World Heritage Sites.

- This is because of its dramatic coral decline.

What's the issue now?

However, Australia has opposed this move, which is part of an ongoing dispute between Unesco and the Australian government over the status of the iconic site.

- After Unesco first debated its “in danger” status in 2017, Canberra committed more than A\$3 billion (£1.bn; \$2.2bn) to improving the reef’s health.
- However, several bleaching events on the reef in the past five years have caused widespread loss of coral.
- Scientists say **the main reason is rising sea temperatures as a result of global warming caused by the burning of fossil fuels.**

Australia's carbon emissions:

Australia's **reliance on coal-fired power** makes it one of the world's largest carbon emitters per capita, but its conservative government has steadfastly backed the country's fossil fuel industries, arguing tougher action on emissions would cost jobs.

What are “in danger” World Heritage Sites?

The List of World Heritage in danger is maintained in accordance with **Article 11 (4) of the 1972 World Heritage Convention.**

Objective: The list is designed to inform the international community of conditions which threaten the very characteristics for which a property was inscribed on the World Heritage List, and to encourage corrective action.

Criteria:

A World Heritage property can be inscribed on the List of World Heritage in Danger by the World Heritage Committee when it finds that **the condition of the property corresponds to at least one of the criteria listed.**

(Note: The criteria list is exhaustive. However, you need not mug up all of them. Just have a brief overview [here](#)).

Implications:

1. Inscribing a site on the List of World Heritage in Danger allows **the World Heritage Committee to allocate immediate assistance from the World Heritage Fund to the endangered property.**
2. It alerts the international community to these situations in the hope that it can join efforts to save these endangered sites.
3. It also requires the World Heritage Committee to develop and adopt, in consultation with the State Party concerned, a programme for corrective measures, and subsequently to monitor the situation of the site.

Some illustrative cases:

Iranian city of Bam: The ancient Citadel and surrounding cultural landscape of the Iranian city of Bam, where 26,000 people lost their lives in the earthquake of December 2003, was simultaneously inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List and on the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2004. Important international efforts are mobilized to salvage the cultural heritage of this devastated city.

Insta Curious:

Do you remember the Declaration on World Heritage? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About the Great Barrier Reef, location and significance.
2. What is a World Heritage site?
3. What are sites "in Danger"?
4. What is the tentative list?

5. What are mixed world Heritage sites?

Mains Link:

What is Coral bleaching? How it is affecting coral reefs across the world. Discuss.

Link: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/great-barrier-reef-should-be-listed-as-in-danger-un-committee-recommends/article34897826.ece/amp/>.

13. UN land conservation award:

Context:

Shyam Sundar Jyani, a Rajasthan-based climate activist, has won the prestigious **United Nations' Land for Life Award** for his environment conservation concept, **Familial Forestry**.

What is familial forestry?

Familial Forestry means **transferring the care of trees and environment in the family** so that a tree becomes a part of the family's consciousness.

- Placing a family at the cornerstone of society, the concept ensures the success of any social campaign.

About the Land for Life Award:

1. Launched at the **UNCCD COP (Conference of Parties) 10 in 2011**.
2. It is considered as the **world's highest reward regarding land conservation and restoration**.
3. It is **organised by UNCCD every two years**.
4. **This year's theme** was "Healthy Land, Healthy Lives".

About United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification:

Established in 1994.

It is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management under the UN.

- It is the only convention stemming from a direct recommendation of the Rio Conference's Agenda 21.
- **Focus areas:** The Convention addresses specifically the arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas, known as the drylands, where some of the most vulnerable ecosystems and peoples can be found.

Insta Curious:

Do you know, the decade 2019-28 is The UN Decade of Family Farming? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:**Prelims Link:**

1. About UNCCD.

2. Rio Conference's Agenda 21.

3. About United Nations' Land for Life Award.

Mains Link:

Differentiate between land degradation and desertification? Discuss impact of desertification on ecology.

14. Climate crisis to hit sooner than feared:

Context:

A landmark draft report was recently released by the **UN's climate science advisers**. The report has not yet been officially released. It is, however, designed to **influence critical policy decisions**.

Highlights of the report:

Climate change will fundamentally reshape life on Earth in the coming decades, even if humans can tame planet-warming greenhouse gas emissions.

Impacts: Species extinction, more widespread disease, unliveable heat, ecosystem collapse, cities menaced by rising seas -- these and other devastating climate impacts are accelerating and bound to become painfully obvious by 2050.

Concern: Dangerous thresholds are closer than once thought, and dire consequences stemming from decades of unbridled carbon pollution are unavoidable in the short term.

Food insecurity: Tens of millions more people are likely to face chronic hunger by 2050, and 130 million more could experience extreme poverty within a decade if inequality is allowed to deepen.

In 2050, coastal cities on the "frontline" of the climate crisis will see hundreds of millions of people at risk from floods and increasingly frequent storm surges made more deadly by rising seas.

Water scarcity: Some 350 million more people living in urban areas will be exposed to water scarcity from severe droughts at 1.5 degrees Celsius of warming -- 410 million at two degrees Celsius.

About the Scientific Advisory Board of the United Nations Secretary-General:

The UN Secretary-General announced the creation of the Scientific Advisory Board on 24 September 2013, during the inaugural meeting of the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

- **Composition:** It will comprise renowned scientists representing various fields of natural, social and human sciences.
- **The central function** of the Board will be to provide advice on science, technology and innovation (STI) for sustainable development to the UN Secretary-General and to Executive Heads of UN organizations.

Insta Curious:

[Do you know what Super Pollutants or Forcers are?](#)

Link: <https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GNS8MTULF.1&imageview=0>.

15. Antarctic Treaty:

Context:

23 June 2021- **60th anniversary of the entry into force of the Antarctic Treaty** (23 June 1961).

Significance of the treaty:

1. Negotiated during the middle of the Cold War by 12 countries with Antarctic interests, it remains **the only example of a single treaty that governs a whole continent**.
2. It is also the foundation of **a rules-based international order for a continent without a permanent population**.

But, the treaty was negotiated in a very different era and is it still relevant today?

While the Antarctic Treaty has been able to successfully respond to a range of challenges, circumstances are radically different in the 2020s compared to the 1950s.

1. Antarctica is much more accessible, partly due to technology but also climate change.
2. More countries now have substantive interests in the continent than the original 12.
3. Some global resources are becoming scarce, especially oil.
4. There is also uncertainty as to China's intentions in Antarctica. China joined the treaty in 1983 and became a consultative party in 1985.
5. This will inevitably result in increased attention being given to the potential for Antarctic mining to take place sometime in the future.

Therefore, Calls to revisit the prohibition on Antarctic mining would seem inevitable.

About the Antarctic Treaty:

Signed between 12 countries in Washington on 1st December 1959 for making the Antarctic Continent a demilitarized zone to be preserved for scientific research only.

- **The twelve original signatories** are Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Chile, France, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, South Africa, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the UK and the US.
- The treaty **entered into force in 1961 and currently has 54 parties**.
- **Headquarters:** Buenos Aires, Argentina.

For the purposes of the treaty system, **Antarctica is defined as all of the land and ice shelves south of 60°S latitude.**

Provisions:

1. Antarctica shall be used for peaceful purposes only(Art. I).
2. Freedom of scientific investigation in Antarctica and cooperation toward that end shall continue(Art. II).
3. Scientific observations and results from Antarctica shall be exchanged and made freely available(Art. III).
4. Article IV effectively seeks to neutralise territorial sovereignty in Antarctica.
5. The treaty also put a freeze on any disputes between claimants over their territories on the continent.

Antarctic Treaty System:

As disputes have arisen over the years, many have been addressed through the expansion of the treaty framework with these agreements. This framework is now referred to as the “Antarctic Treaty System”.

The Antarctic Treaty system is made up of four major international agreements:

1. The 1959 Antarctic Treaty.
2. The 1972 Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals.
3. The 1980 Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources.
4. The 1991 Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about India's two operational research Stations- Maitri & Bharati in Antarctica? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. About the Antarctic Treaty.
2. About the Antarctic Treaty System.
3. India's missions in the Arctic and Antarctic.

Mains Link:

Discuss the objectives of the Antarctic Treaty. Is it relevant still today? Discuss.

16. India faces numerous challenges in its bid to ban single-use plastics:

Context:

The Indian government is planning to phase out **single-use plastics** leading to complete elimination. But concerns revolve around the availability of alternatives and plastic waste management systems.

Background:

In 2019, the Union government in a bid to [free India of single-use plastics by 2022](#), had laid out a multi-ministerial plan to discourage the use of single-use plastics across the country.

The strategy:

A government committee has identified the single use plastic (SUP) items to be banned based on an index of their utility and environmental impact. It has proposed a three-stage ban:

1. **The first category** of SUP items proposed to be phased out are plastic sticks used in balloons, flags, candy, ice-cream and ear buds, and thermocol that is used in decorations.
2. **The second category, proposed to be banned from July 1, 2022**, includes items such as plates, cups, glasses and cutlery such as forks, spoons, knives, straws, trays; wrapping and packing films used in sweet boxes; invitation cards; cigarette packets; stirrers and plastic banners that are less than 100 microns in thickness.
3. **A third category of prohibition** is for non-woven bags below 240 microns in thickness. This is **proposed to start from September next year**.

Challenges ahead:

- It is not going to be an easy task given that close to 26,000 tons of plastic waste is generated across India every day, of which more than 10,000 tons stays uncollected.
- A significant amount of plastic ends up in rivers, oceans and landfills.

What needs to be done?

- The government has to do a thorough economic and environmental cost-benefit analysis.
- The plan has to take into account social and economic impacts for the ban to be successful.
- We need better recycling policies because resources are poor and there needs to be a much broader strategy.

Insta Curious:

Do you know about Plastic eating Bacteria? Can it solve the rising problem of Plastic pollution?[Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- What are single use plastics?
- Uses.
- India's targets.
- Other countries which are planning to phase out the use of single use plastics.

Topics: Disaster and management.

1. DM Act is of 2005 vintage, was first enforced during pandemic:

Context:

Former Chief Secretary of West Bengal Alapan Bandyopadhyay was recently served a show-cause notice by the Union Home Ministry under **Section 51 of the Disaster Management (DM) Act, 2005**, punishable by imprisonment of up to two years or a fine or both.

What's the issue?

The officer abstained himself from the review meeting taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at cyclone-affected Kalaikunda in West Bengal on May 28. This way he has acted in a manner tantamount to refusing to comply with lawful directions of the Central Government and is thus violative of Section 51 (b).

Section 51 of the Disaster Management (DM) Act, 2005:

The Section prescribes “**punishment for obstruction**” for refusal to comply with any direction given by or on behalf of the Central government or the State government or the National Executive Committee or the State Executive Committee or the District Authority under the Act.

- It says **that violation shall be punishable with imprisonment** for a term that may extend to one year or with a fine or both upon conviction.
- It adds that if “such refusal to comply with directions results in loss of lives or imminent danger thereof, shall on conviction be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years”.

Recent uses of this Section:

- Through the particular provision, the Home Ministry made **spitting in public a punishable offence in April last year**.
- Made “wearing of face masks in public places mandatory”.
- On March 30, 2020, when thousands of migrants gathered at the Anand Vihar railway station in Delhi due to the sudden announcement of the countrywide lockdown, two Delhi government officers were suspended and two others were served show-cause notice by the Centre under **the Act for dereliction of duty**.

Background:

The DM Act, 2005, came into existence after the 2004 tsunami.

On March 24, 2020, the Centre, through **the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** headed by the Prime Minister, invoked the provisions of the Act to streamline the management of the pandemic,

empowering district magistrates to take decisions and centralise other decisions on the supply of oxygen and movement of vehicles.

- The Act has been extended across the country till June 30 and it is enforced by the Home Ministry.

For details on the DM Act, refer: <https://www.insightsonindia.com/2021/04/27/disaster-management-act-2/>.

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. What is DM Act?
2. Bodies established under this act.
3. Composition of NDMA.
4. Powers of states and centre under DM act.
5. What is a notified disaster?
6. Functions of NDRF.
7. About Liquid oxygen and its uses.

Mains Link:

Is the Disaster Management Act, 2005, ill-suited to be the main economic law of the country? Analyse the need for a pandemic law in the current situation facing the world.

Link:<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GRK8KP5RO.1&imageview=0>.

Topics: Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.

1. Unlawful Activities Prevention Act, 1967:

Context:

Delivering a judgment defining the contours of the otherwise "vague" **Section 15 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967**, (UAPA) a division bench of the Delhi High Court has laid down some important principles upon the imposition of **Section 15, 17 & 18 of the Act**.

What's the case?

The issue came up while granting bail to Delhi-riots accused who faced charges for being part of a "larger conspiracy" during the **anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019** protests which erupted into violence resulting in deaths across North-East Delhi.

Sections 15, 17 and 18 of UAPA:

1. S. 15 **engravts the offence** of 'terrorist act'.
2. S. 17 lays-down **the punishment** for raising funds for committing a terrorist act.
3. S. 18 engravts 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. The court relied on **the Supreme Court's decision in the case of Hitendra Vishnu Thakur**.
3. Every terrorist may be a criminal but every criminal cannot be labelled terrorist (Hitendra Vishnu Thakur judgment).
4. Terrorist acts should not be equated with the usual law and order problem in the state.
5. "Terrorist Act" Can't Be Casually Applied To Cases Falling Within Conventional Offences Under IPC.

Implications of this judgment:

1. With this, the court has raised the bar for the State to book an individual for terrorism under the UAPA.
2. It also points out alleged misuse of the UAPA against individuals in cases that do not necessarily fall in the category of "terrorism" cases.
3. This caution is significant given the sharp surge in the state's use of this provision in a sweeping range of alleged offences — against tribals in Chhattisgarh, those using social media through proxy servers in Jammu and Kashmir; and journalists in Manipur among others.

Background:

A total of 1126 cases were registered under UAPA in 2019, a sharp rise from 897 in 2015.

For more about UAPA, refer <https://www.insightsonindia.com/2021/01/12/uapa/>.

InstaCurious:

Do you know a few International Legal Instruments to prevent Terrorist Acts? [Read here](#) (Read at the surface, Need not read in depth)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Definition of unlawful activity.
2. Powers of Centre under the act.
3. Is judicial review applicable in such cases?

4. Changes brought about by amendments in 2004 and 2019.
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.

Link: <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/delhi-high-court-calls-out-misuse-of-uapa-raises-bar-for-state-to-slap-terror-tag-7360779/lite/>.

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. National Security Act (NSA), 1980:

Context:

A petition was filed in the Supreme Court to invoke **the National Security Act (NSA)** against hoarding, profiteering, adulteration and black-marketing of COVID-19 essentials, including drugs and equipment.

Background:

Thousands of EWS and BPL citizens are dying on the streets, in vehicles, in hospital compounds and their homes due to hoarding of hospital beds, adulterated COVID medicines, black marketing of medical equipment like oxygen cylinders and huge profiteering in the sale of life-saving injections like Remdesivir, Tocilizumab, etc." Therefore, these acts should be taken up seriously and the guilty should be punished.

About the National Security Act (NSA):

The NSA is a **preventive detention law**.

- Preventive Detention involves the detainment (containment) of a person in order to keep him/her from committing future crimes and/or from escaping future prosecution.

Article 22 (3) (b) of the Constitution allows for preventive detention and restriction on personal liberty for reasons of state security and public order.

Article 22(4) states that:

No law providing for preventive detention shall authorise the detention of a person for a longer period than three months unless:

- An Advisory Board reports sufficient cause for extended detention.

The 44th Amendment Act of 1978 has reduced the period of detention without obtaining the opinion of an advisory board from three to two months. However, this provision has not yet been brought into force, hence, the original period of three months still continues.

Period of Confinement:

- The maximum period for which one may be detained is 12 months. But the term can be extended if the government finds fresh evidence.

- A person can be held for 10 days without being told the charges against them. The person can appeal before a high court advisory board but will not be allowed a lawyer during the trial.

Concerns associated with the misuse of this law:

- **Article 22 (1) of the Indian Constitution** says an arrested person cannot be denied the right to consult, and to be defended by, a legal practitioner of his choice.
- According to **Section 50 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CRPC)**, any person arrested has to be informed of the grounds of arrest and has the right to bail.

However, under **National Security Act**, none of these rights are available to the person detained. The government holds **the right to conceal information which it considers to be against public interest to disclose.**

Insta Curious:

Do you know what Civil Law and Common Law are? [Read here](#)

Instalinks:

Prelims Link:

1. Who can invoke NSA?
2. Appeals against preventive detention?
3. Right to be informed the reason for arrest under this?
4. Applicability of Constitutional rights in this regard.
5. The writs under the constitution.

Mains Link:

What is the National security act? Why is it termed as a draconian law? Discuss.

Link:

<https://epaper.thehindu.com/Home/MShareArticle?OrgId=GJ98KIJ0I.1&imageview=0>.

2. What loss of safe harbour means for Twitter?

Context:

According to some media reports, Twitter has lost its **intermediary status** in India over non-compliance of **the new IT rules** that came into effect on May 26.

What does intermediary status mean?

As per **Section 2 (1) of the Information Technology Act**, an intermediary is a person/entity that receives, stores and transmits information or provides service for transmission of information.

- **This includes** telecom service providers, network service providers, internet service providers, search engines, online payment sites, online-auction sites, online-marketplaces and even cyber cafes.

Please note, **intermediary status is not a registration granted by the government.**

Benefits of this status:

Intermediaries like Twitter are protected under **Section 79 of the Information Technology Act** that states that **they cannot be held liable for the third party content published on their platform** as long as they comply with the legal order to take down content from courts or other authorities.

What is safe harbour protection?

Consider, a user's tweets go viral and that results in death or violence. Now, **under safe harbour protection Twitter cannot be held liable just because of it.** However, they will have to take down the content if they get a legal order from the court or authorities. This is what termed as **safe harbour protection.**

How does this impact Twitter, then?

In the short run, since the protection accorded to Twitter under Section 79 of the IT Act is now gone, it opens up the platform to the possibility of any and all penal action that is likely to be taken against it as a publisher of content.

- This means that if someone puts out any content on Twitter that leads to some form of violence, or violates any Indian law with respect to content, not only the person that has put out the tweet will be held responsible, even Twitter will be legally liable for the content as it no longer has the protection.

Who will decide intermediary status?

It is the courts, not the government, who will decide on whether Twitter or other social media intermediaries can lose this status under law.

Why do platforms want safe harbour?

Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, which have millions of users, argue that they cannot possibly be aware of every post, just as the managing director of Amazon does not always know all the items being sold on the online marketplace.

- As a result, they cannot be held liable. Removing safe harbour protections would mean that the platforms have to actively police and censor whatever content is available on their services, which in turn could violate free speech and other fundamental rights.

What is the argument against safe harbour?

There's an argument that by using ranking algorithms to determine what gets seen on their platforms, these firms are making editorial judgements.

InstaCurious:

Do you know what passive intermediaries are? [Read Here](#)

InstaLinks:

Prelims Link:

- Overview of the new rules.
- Who are intermediaries as per the definition?
- What is safe harbour protection?
- Grievance redressal mechanism as provided under the new rules.

Mains Link:

What are the concerns being raised against the new IT rules? Discuss ways to address these concerns.

Link:<https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/twitter-india-government-guidelines-it-act-7361779/lite/>.

Topics: Security challenges and their management in border areas; linkages of organized crime with terrorism.

1. A year after Galwan clash

Context: One year anniversary since the Galwan clash between Chinese and Indian armed forces

Background:

- India and China share a border that is more than **3,440km (2,100 miles)** long and have overlapping territorial claims.
- In 2020, Indian and Chinese armies were locked in a tense stand-off at **three points along the Line of Actual Control** — the Galwan River Valley, Hot Springs area and the Pangong Lake
- Even as India and China were engaged in military-level talks and in controlled engagement, there was a violent face-off between the army troops of both sides at **Galwan Valley in Eastern Ladakh region**.

The strategic importance of Galwan River Valley (GRV):

- The **Galwan River is the highest ridgeline** and it allows the Chinese to dominate **the Shyok route passes**, which is close to the river.
- It lies **along the western sector of the LAC and close to Aksai Chin**, a disputed area claimed by India but controlled by China.

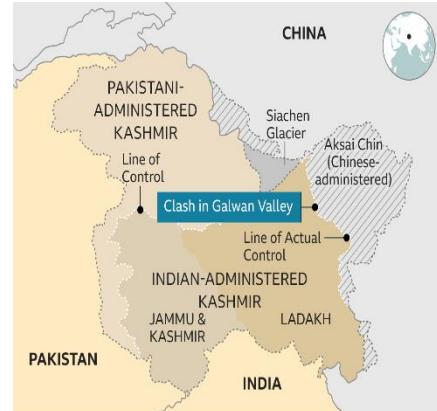
Why tensions suddenly rose in this area?

- India is trying to construct a feeder road emanating from **Darbuk-Shyok Village – Daulat Beg Odi road (DS-DBO road)**.
- This **road runs along the Shyok River** and is the most critical line of communications close to LAC.

- Hence, Chinese were keen on controlling this area as they fear that the Indian side could end up threatening their position on the **Aksai Chin plateau** by using the river valley.

What actions has China taken since this event?

- PLA has built additional accommodation in the depth areas** along the LAC on its side and is preparing for establishing a long haul presence in the area
- Troops **are being rotated** in these areas by the Chinese
- China is also **intensifying construction work** behind the main confrontation points in the **Aksai Chin**
- Small arms exercise** was conducted by the PLA in Tibet. In this exercise, PLA soldiers were trained in anti-tank rocket launchers, grenade launchers, anti-aircraft machine guns and other weapons
- Reports have also indicated that China has deployed a **long-range rocket artillery** in the border region at an altitude of 5200 m



Disengagement process since last one year after the tense stand-off

- India and China have so far held **11 rounds of military talks** for disengagement and de-escalation in Eastern Ladakh since the stand-off began in May last year.
- India's aim in all these talks has been the **restoration of status quo ante of April 2020**
- Both the sides have **agreed to and actually disengaged from the finger areas** on the North Bank of Pangong Tso.
- Both sides have also **emptied the heights of the Kailash ranges** on the South Bank where Indian Army was in an advantageous position.
- There has been **no progress** in the talks for **disengagement at Gogra and Hotsprings** as well as in Demchok and the strategic Depsang Valley.

InstaCurious:

Have you heard of Ice Stupas of Ladakh? [Read Here](#)

Insta links

Prelims links

- Geographical position of all areas which were point of contention between the two armies
- Important geographical features in these areas. Ex: Rivers, mountain valleys etc

Mains links

Discuss the steps taken by China and India to de-escalate the border tension which occurred in 2020.

Topics: Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate.

1. Chief of Defence Staff:

Context:

[Chief of Defence Staff](#) to chair important meeting to sort out issues on theatre command.

- The meeting is called to iron out the differences on issue of the structure of the Theatre Commands.

Background:

The war fighting structure of the Armed Forces (Army, Air Force and Navy) is being reorganised into theatre commands with **an aim to have the assets of all three forces under one commander responsible for all operations under his theatre**.

- At present, the three armed forces have together 17 commands with Army and Air Force having seven commands each and Navy has three commands.

Read [this](#) to know more about theatre commands.

About CDS:

- He will be the single-point military adviser to the government as suggested by **the Kargil Review Committee in 1999**.
- He will be a **Four-star General**.
- CDS acts as **the permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee** which will also have three service chiefs as members.
- His core function will be to foster greater operational synergy between the three service branches of the Indian military and keep inter-service frictions to a minimum.

Conditions:

- Not eligible to hold any Government office after demitting the office of CDS.
- No private employment without prior approval for a period of five years after demitting the office of CDS.

Roles and functions:

1. CDS will provide “single-point military advice” to the government, inject synergy in planning, procurements and logistics in the armed forces.
2. It will ensure integration of land-air-sea operations through the eventual setting up of theatre commands.
3. The CDS will also function as the military advisor to the PM-led Nuclear Command Authority, as also have direct command of tri-Service organizations to handle the new warfare domains of space and cyberspace.
4. He will function as the Principal Military Adviser to the Defence Minister and also as the Permanent Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC).
5. The CDS will be member of Defence Acquisition Council and Defence Planning Committee.

Insta Curious:

Do you know what Theatre of War & Theatre of Operations are? [Read Here](#)

Mains Link:

Discuss the need for and significance of theatre commandas.

Link: <https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/cds-to-chair-meet-on-theatre-commands/article34897239.ece>.

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► **Subjectwise Prelims Test Series Only GS:** 38 GS Tests. Starts from 20th July 2021 (English & Hindi Medium)

► **Combined Prelims Test Series:** 78 Tests [66GS + 12 CSAT] Starts from 15th July 2021

► **Only CSAT:** 12 Tests. Starts from 14th August 2021

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GENERAL STUDIES – 4

1. A Model Panchayat Citizens Charter:

Context:

A **Model Panchayat Citizens Charter/ framework** for delivery of the services across the 29 sectors, aligning actions with localised **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**, was released recently.

- It has been prepared by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj (MoPR) in collaboration with **National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR)**.

Significance:

The Citizen Charter would ensure transparent and effective delivery of public services for sustainable development and enhanced citizen service experiences; deepening inclusive and accountable Local Self Governments by incorporating diverse views while designing and delivering services.

Need for:

- Panchayats constitute the third tier of government in the rural areas and represent the first level of Government interaction for over 60 per cent of the Indian populace.
- Panchayats are responsible for delivery of basic services as enshrined under **article 243G of the Constitution of India**, specifically in the areas of Health & Sanitation, Education, Nutrition, Drinking Water.

About Citizens' Charters:

- **Citizens' Charters initiative** is a response to the quest for solving the problems which a citizen encounters, day in and day out, while dealing with the organisations providing public services.
- The concept of Citizens' Charter enshrines **the trust between the service provider and its users**.
- The concept was **first articulated and implemented in the United Kingdom in 1991**.

Six principles of the Citizens Charter movement as originally framed, were:

- (i) Quality: Improving the quality of services.
- (ii) Choice : Wherever possible.
- (iii) Standards :Specify what to expect and how to act if standards are not met.
- (iv) Value: For the taxpayers money.
- (v) Accountability : Individuals and Organisations.
- (vi) Transparency.

In India:

The concept of citizen's charter was **first adopted at a 'Conference of Chief Ministers of various States and Union Territories' held in May 1997 in the national capital**.

FACTS FOR PRELIMS

1. Litoria mira:

- They are **new frog species** discovered recently in the rainforests of **New Guinea**. They are **chocolate coloured**.
- The name is **inspired by the Latin adjective mirum**, which means **surprised or strange**, stemming from the scientist's surprise in discovering an undescribed member of the predominately Australian Litoria genus of tree frogs.
- **Litoria mira** can be distinguished from all other Litoria by its unique combination of moderately large size, webbing on hand, relatively short and robust limbs, and small violet patch of skin on the edge of its eyes.



Please note that the **island of New Guinea is separated from the 'horn' of Queensland by the Torres Strait**.

2. Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT):

The Union government has appointed J.B. Mohapatra as the interim chief of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) for three months.

About CBDT:

1. It is a **statutory body** established as per the **Central Board of Revenue Act, 1963**.
2. It is **India's official financial action task force unit**.
3. It is administered by the **Department of Revenue under the Ministry of Finance**.

3. Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine:

- The World Health Organization has approved the **Sinovac COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use**. This is **the second Chinese vaccine to receive the WHO's green light**.
- Last month **Sinopharm** became **the first Chinese vaccine to be approved by the WHO**.
- The listing paves the way for countries to quickly approve and import a vaccine for distribution, especially those states without an international-standard regulator of their own.

4. Who are UN Special Rapporteurs?

They are **independent experts working on behalf of the United Nations**. They work on a country or a thematic mandate specified by the **United Nations Human Rights Council**.

- They have mandates to report and advise on human rights (civil, cultural, economic, political, and social) from a thematic or country-specific perspective.
- Rapporteurs **do not receive any financial compensation for their work from the United Nations**.

5. Justice A.K. Mishra to head NHRC:

Former Supreme Court judge Arun Kumar Mishra will be new chairperson of the **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)**.

The appointment was made by the selection panel consisting of Prime Minister, Home Minister, Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Lok Sabha Speaker and the Leader of Opposition.

NHRC, established in 1993, is an independent **statutory body** as per the provisions of the **Protection of Human Rights Act of 1993**.

For details on NHRC, refer: <https://www.insightsonindia.com/2020/09/18/national-human-rights-commission-nhrc/>.

6. AmbiTAG:

- AmbiTAG is **India's first indigenous temperature data logger for cold chain management**.
- It is an Internet-of-Things (IoT) device that records real-time ambient temperature during the transportation of perishable products, vaccines and even body organs and blood.
- Developed by **IIT Ropar**.

7. Tulsa Race Massacre of May-June 1921:

- It is one of the worst incidents of violent **racial hate** in the US' modern history.
- It involved widespread killings in Tulsa, Oklahoma, targeting relatively well-to-do African Americans, and the extensive damage to their property by white mobs.
- **Tulsa** was especially known for being an unofficial sanctuary city for **African Americans** suffering the consequences of harsh segregation or Jim Crow laws in pre-civil rights America. It was also called as the "Black Wall Street" of the U.S.



Why in News?

U.S. President Joe Biden recently became **the first sitting American head of state to officially recognise the incident.**

8. Teachers Eligibility Test:

- Teachers Eligibility Test is the minimum qualification **required in India for a person to be eligible for appointment as a teacher for Classes I to VIII.**
- The test is **mandatory for teaching jobs in Indian government schools.**
- The TET is **conducted by both the central and state governments of India.**
- The test is conducted to meet the objectives of the **Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009.**

Why in News?

The **Ministry of Education** has extended the validity of the Teachers Eligibility Test (TET) qualifying certificate from seven years to life with retrospective effect from 2011.

9. SAGE Portal:

The **Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment**, launched **the SAGE (Seniorcare Aging Growth Engine) initiative** and SAGE portal to support India's elderly persons.

- The portal will be a "one-stop access" of elderly care products and services by credible start-ups.
- The start-ups selected under SAGE will be those which will provide new innovative products and services to elderly persons in various areas like health, travel, finance, legal ,housing, food among others.
- The Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment will act as a facilitator for this scheme.
- A fund of uptoRs.1 crore as one-time equity will be granted to each selected start-up.

10. Operation Sagar Aaraksha II:

Indian Coast Guard (ICG), in coordination with Sri Lankan authorities, has been tirelessly engaged in fighting a major fire onboard the Chemical laden container vessel **MV X-Press Pearl** anchored off Colombo since 25 May 2021.

- This coordinated joint operation undertaken to respond to potential environmental danger has been christened as **Sagar Aaraksha-II.**

11. INS Sandhayak:

- It is Hydrographic survey ship, the first of its class indigenously designed and built.
- It was decommissioned recently after 40 years of service.
- The ship had undertaken approximately 200 major hydrographic surveys and numerous minor surveys.



The ship has also been an active participant in many significant operations such as:

1. Op Pawan – assisting the Indian Peace Keeping Force in Sri Lanka in 1987.
2. Op Rainbow - rendering humanitarian assistance post 2004 Tsunami.

- Participation in the maiden joint Indo-US HADR Exercise ‘Tiger-Triumph’.

12. Tiananmen square massacre:

Context: 32nd anniversary of the event was observed recently.

What happened?

On **June 4, 1989** Chinese troops cracked down on **pro-democracy protesters** around Beijing’s Tiananmen Square. No official death toll has ever been released, but rights groups estimate hundreds, if not thousands were killed.

- The protests were primarily student-led demonstrations calling for democracy, free speech and a free press in China.

13. World Environment Day:

Observed on the **5th of June** annually to encourage awareness and environmental protection.

- The United Nations Assembly established World Environment Day in **1972**, which was the first day of the Stockholm Conference on the human environment.
- However, it was first observed in the United States in **1974** with the theme- ‘Only one earth’.
- The theme of World Environment Day 2021** is ‘Reimagine. Recreate. Restore.’ The theme is based on the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, which will be launched by the United Nations this year.
- Pakistan will be the global host for **2021**.

14. YounTab scheme:

Ladakh Lt Governor has launched the YounTab scheme for students in the Union Territory to encourage digital learning.

- Under the scheme, 12,300 tablets with pre-loaded online and offline content, including textbooks, video lectures and online class applications, would be distributed to government school students from Class 6th to 12th.

15. CBSE collaborates with Microsoft to introduce Coding & Data Science in schools:

- CBSE has collaborated with Microsoft to introduce Coding and Data Science in schools for classes 6 to 12.
- These new subjects will be introduced in 2021-22 academic session.

16. I-Familia:

- It is a Global database to identify missing persons.
- Launched by Interpol.
- It can identify missing persons through family DNA and help the police solve cold cases in member countries.

17. Surakshit Hum Surakshit Tum Abhiyaan:

NITI Aayog & Piramal Foundation have launched **Surakshit Hum Surakshit Tum Abhiyaan** in [112 Aspirational Districts](#).

- Campaign Will Provide Covid Home-Care Support to 20 Lakh Citizens.
- The Abhiyaan is being part of a special initiative, **Aspirational Districts Collaborative**, in which local leaders, civil societies and volunteers work with district administrations to address emerging problems across key focus areas of the Aspirational Districts Programme.

18. Operation Pangea XIV:

- A record number of fake online pharmacies have been shut down under Operation Pangea XIV targeting the sale of counterfeit and illicit medicines and medical products.
- The operation coordinated by [INTERPOL](#) involved police, customs and health regulatory authorities from 92 countries.
- It resulted in 113,020 web links including websites and online marketplaces being closed down or removed, the highest number since the first Operation Pangea in 2008.



19. GI certified mangoes in News:

Sixteen varieties of mangoes including three GI certified varieties exported to Bahrain from West Bengal & Bihar.

- These include GI certified **Khirsapati & Lakshmanbhog (West Bengal)**, **Zardalu (Bihar)**.



20. CESL and Ladakh sign an MoU to make the Union Territory carbon neutral:

Convergence Energy Services Limited (CESL) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Administration of Union Territory (UT) of Ladakh, to make it a clean and green UT.

- CESL is a wholly owned subsidiary of Energy Efficiency Services Limited (EESL) under **Ministry of Power**.

21. YUVA: Prime Minister's Scheme For Mentoring Young Authors:

- It is a national Scheme For Mentoring Young Authors' to encourage youngsters to harness their writing skills.
- This scheme will ensure creating a pool of authors of below 30 years who are ready to express themselves and project India on any international platform, as well as it will help in projecting Indian culture and literature globally.



22. 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.



23. Indo-Thai CORPAT:

The 31st edition of the **India-Thailand Coordinated Patrol (Indo-Thai CORPAT)** between the Indian Navy and the Royal Thai Navy is being held.

24. Argostemma quarantena:

- It is a new plant species belonging to the coffee family.
- It was recently spotted in Wagamon hills in Kerala.
- It has been named Argostemma quarantena to commemorate the millions who have died in the pandemic.



25. Nagorno-Karabakh region:

- Nagorno-Karabakh is part of Azerbaijan, but its population is majority Armenian. As the Soviet Union saw increasing tensions in its constituent republics in the 1980s, Nagorno-Karabakh voted to become part of Armenia – sparking a war which stopped with a ceasefire in 1994.
- Since then, Nagorno-Karabakh has remained part of Azerbaijan but is controlled by separatist ethnic Armenians backed by the Armenian government.

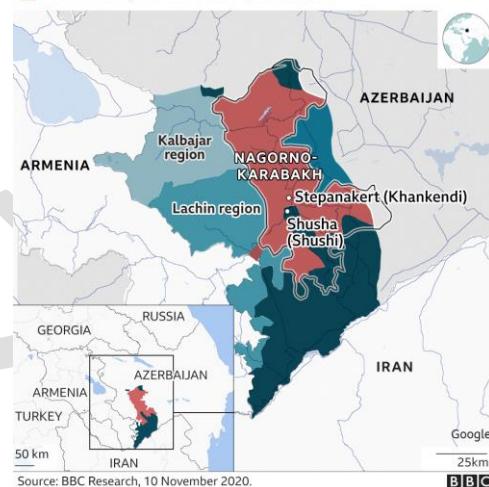
Context:

A brief war took place last year in a region recaptured in disputed Nagorno-Karabakh.

- Azerbaijan seized back swathes of territory in the separatist ethnic Armenia region with the help of Turkish combat drones and other weaponry from Ankara.
- The conflict claimed 6,000 lives and ended with a Russian-brokered truce in November that saw ethnic Armenians pushed out of large parts of the land they had won during a brutal post-Soviet war in the 1990s.

Armenia-Azerbaijan peace deal

- Armenian forces to withdraw by 15 Nov
- Armenian forces to withdraw by 1 Dec
- Areas regained by Azerbaijan in the war
- Area of deployment for Russian peacekeepers

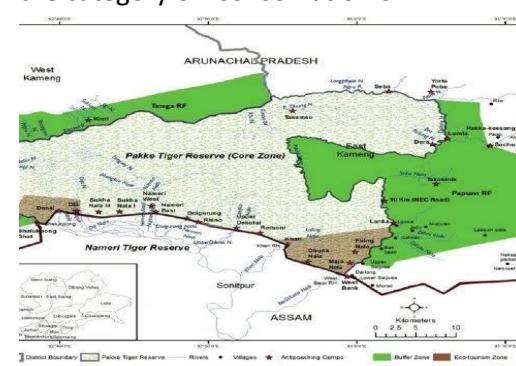


26. Dihing Patkai:

- Dihing Patkai is Assam's 7th National Park.
- Assam now has the third most National Parks after the 12 in Madhya Pradesh and nine in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.
- It has 47 species each of reptiles and mammals, including tiger and clouded leopard.
- National Parks in Assam: Kaziranga, Manas, Nameri, Orang, Dibru-Saikhowa and Raimona National Park. Kaziranga and Manas are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. They are also tiger reserves along with Nameri and Orang.
- Raimona adjoins the Buxa Tiger Reserve in West Bengal to its west, Phipsoo Wildlife Sanctuary in Bhutan to its north and the first addition to Manas National Park to the east.

27. 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.



28. Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI):

Food safety regulator FSSAI has mandated food business operators to mention FSSAI licence or registration number on cash receipts or purchase invoice with effect from October 1.

About 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.

29. Odisha forest department announces cash reward for rescuing gharials:

- Odisha has announced a cash reward of Rs 1,000 for rescuing **gharials**, a critically endangered crocodile species, and informing wildlife personnel.
- It will also provide compensation to fishermen, whose fishing nets are destroyed by gharials.



Key facts:

1. The gharial is listed in **schedule 1 of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** and also described as **critically endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List of Threatened Species**.
2. They are genetically weaker than salt water crocodiles and muggers.

30. Cabinet approves 5 MHz spectrum for Railways:

The Union Cabinet has approved the allotment of **5 MHz spectrum in the premium 700 MHz band to the Railways** for captive use in areas of public safety and security services.

Benefits:

1. With this spectrum, the Railways will introduce **Long-Term Evolution (LTE)-based Mobile Train Radio Communication (MTRC)** on its routes.
2. This will help prevent train accidents and reduce delays by enabling real-time interaction between the Loco Pilot, Station Master and the Control Centre.
3. This will also enable the Railways to take up **Internet of Things (IoT)-based remote monitoring**, particularly of coaches, wagons and locos, and monitor live feeds of CCTV cameras in the coaches.

LTE (Long-Term Evolution) is a fourth-generation (4G) wireless standard that provides increased network capacity and speed for cellphones and other cellular devices compared with third-generation (3G) technology.

31. China-Sri Lanka Friendship Hospital opened:

- China-Sri Lanka Friendship Hospital was recently inaugurated in Polonnaruwa- located in Sri Lanka's North Central Province.
- It has been built with a Chinese grant of \$60 million.

32. National Security Guard (NSG):

- The NSG is a counter-terrorism unit that formally came into existence in 1986 by an act of Parliament- '**National Security Guard Act, 1986**'.
- It operates under the Ministry of Home Affairs and is a task-oriented force.
- It is considered a **federal contingency force** that has been given the specific task of handling all forms of terrorism in India.
- NSG personnel are also called **Black Cats** because of their black uniform and black cat insignia on their uniform.

33. Umling La:

- At 5,793m (19,005ft) above the sea level, Umling La is one of the highest motorable roads in the world.
- Located in the Ladakh region.

- The 54 km long road passing through Umling La Pass connected the villages of Chisumle and Demchok and took six years to be built by BRO under Project Himank.

Top 13 World's Highest Motorable Passes or Roads

If you are into adventure Travel, especially in the mountains, then you must have heard of terms like Highest Lakes in the world, Highest Motorable Mountain Passes in the world, Highest Motorable Roads in the world, etc.. Let's look at the Top 13 Highest Motorable Passes or Roads in the world whose altitude data points are measured in compliance with SRTM or with modern age GPS systems.

Highest Mountain Roads & Passes



1 Umling La or Umlingla Pass Ladakh, India

In 2017, BRO has built and opened the world's highest road over Umling La pass or Umling La connecting Chisumle and Demchok villages. Umling La pass is about 105 KMs from Hanle Village and about 235 KMs from Leh.

5,883 Mtrs or 19,300 Feet

2 Road to Uturuncu Potosi, Bolivia

The road to Uturuncu above col is situated in Potosi, Bolivia which was used to be considered as the world's highest motorable road at a staggering altitude of 5,777 Mtrs or 18,953 Feet until India opened up Umlingla.

5,777 Mtrs or 18,953 Feet

3 A Road uphill Mana Pass or Dungri La - Uttarakhand, India

Mana Pass or Dungri La is situated at the border between Tibet and India in the state of Uttarakhand. Civilians, though native to India, with prior permits from the army can travel up there.

5,610 Mtrs or 18,406 Feet

4 Marsimek La or Marsimik La Ladakh, India

Marsimek La or Marsimik La is situated in Ladakh, India where civilians, though native to India, with prior permits from the army can travel and scale this daunting pass at an altitude of 5,582 Mtrs.

5,582 Mtrs or 18,313 Feet

5 Semo La Central Tibet

Semo La is situated in the central part of Tibet. According to wiki link of Semo La, travellers use this route to go to Mount Qomolangma (Everest), Tso La, and Mount Kailash, especially when mud makes access by the more southern route difficult.

5,565 Mtrs or 18,258 Feet

6 Photi La Ladakh, India

The latest unknown entry into the world's highest motorable passes or roads is Photi La pass which is situated in India - Ladakh region, about 30 odd KMs from an amazingly beautiful place on this earth called Manali.

5,524 Mtrs or 18,124 Feet

7 Dongkha La or Donkia La Pass North Sikkim, India

On number seven, we have Dongkha La or Donkia Pass located in North Sikkim having Tso (Chomola Lake or Choloma Lake (16th highest lake in the world) very near to it).

5,486 Mtrs or 17,999 Feet

8 Kaksang La Ladakh, India

Kaksang La pass is situated in Changthang region of Ladakh on the way to Manali. It is a very difficult pass to cross. You will be going over Hora La Pass that comes first as you start ascending from Manali ahead of Changthang near Tso Moriri.

5,438 Mtrs or 17,841 Feet

9 Suge La West of Lhasa, Tibet

Suge La is situated in Tibet about 110 KMs northwest of Lhasa. Once you cross the valley in deep snow, after reaching the top, you get an amazing view of Chomo Gangsre mountain which boasts an altitude of 7,048 Mtrs.

5,430 Mtrs or 17,815 Feet

10 Chang La Ladakh, India

Surprise, surprise!!... Well, yeah, those of you who have been to Ladakh will be in a surprise to know that Changla pass is higher than Khardung La too as per the readings in compliance to SRTM or with modern age GPS systems.

5,360 Mtrs or 17,586 Feet

11 Khardung La Ladakh, India

Number eleven on the list is the falsely claimed highest motorable pass in the world named Khardung La pass, situated in Ladakh, India. I am thankful for the stars that at least it made it in this list after all the hype around it.

5,359 Mtrs or 17,582 Feet

12 Taglang La or Tanglang La Ladakh, India

Second last on the list is Taglang La or Tanglang La pass which is located in Ladakh, India. It comes on one of the most beautiful & the adventurous road of the world that is Manali - Leh Highway.

5,328 Mtrs or 17,480 Feet

13 Wari La Ladakh, India

Last on the list is an desolated pass situated in Ladakh, India which is connecting the direct route from Nubra Valley to Pangong Tso and falls under Nubra Valley. The route to Wari La is quite desolate.

5,312 Mtrs or 17,428 Feet

What defines motorable pass or road for this list?

A road or pass where an average skilled local citizen / civilian driver or rider, with permits from army if required, can take an SUV car having high ground clearance (4x4 or 4x4) or an average powered motorbike irrespective of the fact whether the road is metalled / tarred or unpaved / dirt track as long as such a vehicle can be driven and maintain decent connectivity.

34. Tree of coffee family discovered in Andaman and Nicobar

- A 15 metre tall tree that belongs to genus of the coffee family has recently been discovered in **Andaman Islands**
- The new species *Pyrostria laljii*, is also the **first record** of the genus *Pyrostria* in India. Trees belonging to these species are usually found in Madagascar
- The tree is distinguished by a long stem with a whitish coating on the trunk and oblong-obovate leaves with a cuneate base and was first reported from Wandoor forest in South Andaman
- Other places where tree could be located are: Jarawa reserve forest, chidia tapu forest
- *Pyrostria laljii*: Critically endangered as per IUCN status

35. Bidder pays \$ 28 million for trip to space with Bezos

- Bidding was recently carried out for a seat alongside Jeff Bezos on board the **first crewed spaceflight** of the billionaire's company **Blue Origin**
- Company's launch vehicle is called **New Shepherd**

36. Copperplate inscriptions found at Srisailam temple

- The Bhramarambha Mallikarjuna Devasthanam, engaged in reviving ancient Ganta Matham near Srisailam temple complex, chanced upon six sets of copperplate inscriptions on Sunday.
- There were 18 copper leaves found that could be dated back to somewhere between 14 and 16 centuries.
- The inscriptions depict the far and wide patronage by people.
- Out of the six sets, four have inscriptions in Sanskrit and Nandi-Nāgarī script and the other two plates are in Telugu script, he added.

37. National Securities Depository Limited:

- The enactment of **Depositories Act** in August 1996 paved the way for establishment of NSDL in August 1996.
- It handles most of the securities held and settled in dematerialized form in the Indian capital market.
- NSDL works to support the investors and brokers in the capital market of the country.
- It aims at ensuring the safety and soundness of Indian marketplaces by developing settlement solutions that increase efficiency, minimize risk and reduce costs.

38. EU Generalised System of Preferences (GSP):

A recent resolution was recently adopted by the European Parliament, urging the **EU Commission to consider temporary withdrawal of the GSP+ status given to Sri Lanka**.

- The **GSP** allows vulnerable developing countries to pay fewer or no duties on exports to the EU, giving them vital access to the EU market and contributing to their growth.

Background:

Sri Lanka gained the **GSP +, or the EU's 'Generalised Scheme of Preferences'** in 2017, on Colombo's commitment to implement 27 international conventions on human rights, labour conditions, protection of the environment and good governance.

39. Jivan Vayu:

- It is nation's first power-free CPAP device 'Jivan Vayu'.
- Developed by IIT Ropar.

What is CPAP?

- Continuous positive airway pressure therapy (CPAP) uses a machine to help a person who has obstructive sleep apnea (OSA) breathe more easily during sleep.
- A CPAP machine increases air pressure in your throat so that your airway doesn't collapse when you breathe in.

40. Jardalu Mango:

Jardalu or Zardalu mango is a unique variety of **mango grown in Bhagalpur and adjoining districts of Bihar**.

- It received the GI tag in 2018.

41. Raja Parba festival of Odisha:

- This is a three-day-long festival dedicated to **Mother Earth (Bhuma Devi)** and womanhood at large.
- The first day of the festival is called **Pahili Raja**, the second is **Mithuna Sankranti** and the third **Bhu dahan or Basi Raja**.
- The fourth and final day is called **Vasumati snana** (bathing of Mother Earth).
- This festival is also associated with the end of the summer season and the arrival of the monsoon.

42. Project O2 for India:

'Project O2 for India' of the **Office of Principal Scientific Adviser**, Government of India, is to enable stakeholders working to augment the country's ability to meet this rise in demand for medical oxygen in the wake of the second wave of the covid pandemic.

43. National Geographic recognises 'Southern Ocean' as globe's fifth ocean:

The National Geographic magazine has recognised **the 'Southern Ocean' as the world's fifth ocean**.

1. The Southern Ocean is the only ocean 'to touch three other oceans and to completely embrace a continent rather than being embraced by them'.
2. Its northern limit is a latitude of 60 degrees south.
3. It is also defined by its Antarctic Circumpolar Current that was formed 34 million years ago. The current flows from west to east around Antarctica.

The **International Hydrographic Organization** too had recognised the term in 1937 before repealing it in 1953.

44. World Giving Index 2021:

The World Giving Index (WGI) is an annual report published by **the Charities Aid Foundation**. The report is the world's largest survey of charitable endeavors from around the world. **The first edition was released in September 2010.**

The report looks at three aspects of giving behavior:

1. Helped a stranger
2. Donated money to a charity
3. Volunteered time to an organization

Latest findings:

1. The most generous country in the world is Indonesia.
2. Australia and New Zealand the only high income countries to remain in this year's Top 10.
3. India is 14th most charitable country.

45. GI certified Jalgaon banana:

- In 2016, Jalgaon Banana got GI certification which was registered with Nisargraja Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) Jalgaon.
- Jalgaon district is in Maharashtra.
- India is the world's leading producer of bananas with a share of around 25% in total output.
- Andhra Pradesh, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Kerala, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh contribute more than 70% of the country's banana production.



46. **BRICS Network University:**

- BRICS Network University is a **union of higher education institutions of the five BRICS member countries**, formed with the objective of enhancing educational cooperation in general, and especially in the realm of research and innovation.
- **IIT Bombay** is the lead institution of India for the BRICS Network University.

47. **Drone Survey Mandatory for All National Highways Projects:**

- **National Highways Authority of India**, under Ministry of Road Transport & Highways has made mandatory use of drones for monthly video recording of National Highway projects during all stages of development, construction, operation and maintenance.
- Contractors and Concessionaires shall carry out the drone video recording in presence of Team Leader of the Supervision Consultant and upload comparative project videos of the current and last month on NHAI's portal '**Data Lake**'.

48. **National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC):**

Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and Ministry of Culture have signed an MoU for Cooperation in Development of **National Maritime Heritage Complex at Lothal, Gujarat**.

- NMHC would be developed as an international tourist destination, where the maritime heritage of India from ancient to modern times would be showcased.
- The unique feature of NMHC is the recreation of **ancient Lothal city**, which is one of the prominent cities of the ancient Indus valley civilization dating to 2400 BC.



49. **AdiPrashikshan Portal:**

ADI PRASHIKSHAN portal is a **Central Repository of all training programs** conducted by Tribal Research Institutes (TRIs), different divisions of Ministry, National Society for Education of Tribal Students (NESTS), Centre of Excellences funded by Ministry of Tribal Affairs and National Tribal Research Institute.

50. **VivaTech:**

- VivaTech is one of the largest digital and **startup events in Europe, held in Paris every year since 2016**.
- It is **jointly organised by Publicis Groupe** - a prominent advertising and marketing conglomerate and **Les Echos** - a leading French media group.
- The event brings together stakeholders in technology innovation and the startup ecosystem and includes exhibitions, awards, panel discussions and startup contests.

51. **What is Juneteenth?**

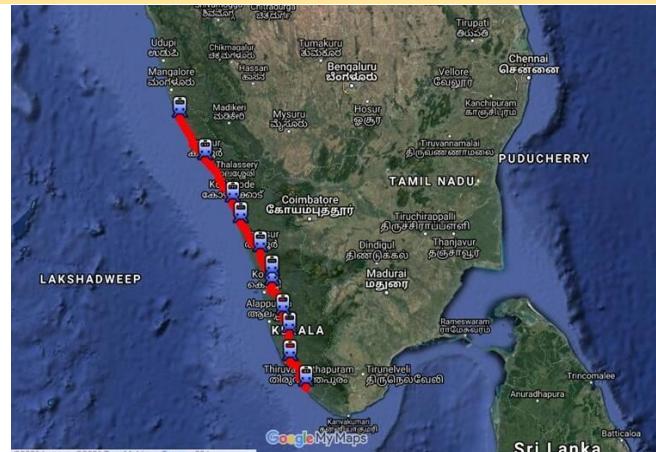
US Government has recognised Juneteenth, or June 19th, as a federal holiday.

What is Juneteenth?

1. The day is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of **the ending of slavery in the US and is observed on June 19**.
2. It is also known as **Emancipation Day or Juneteenth Independence Day**.
3. On June 19, 1865, **Major General Gordon Granger** arrived in Galveston, Texas and announced the end of both the Civil War and slavery. Since then, Juneteenth has become a largely symbolic date representing freedom for African Americans.

52. Kerala's SilverLine project:

- It is Kerala's flagship **semi high-speed railway project** aimed at reducing travel time between the state's northern and southern ends.
- It links Kerala's southern end and state capital Thiruvananthapuram with its northern end of Kasaragod.
- The line is proposed to be 529.45 kms long, covering 11 districts.
- The project is being executed by **the Kerala Rail Development Corporation Limited (KRDCL)**. KRDCL, or K-Rail, is a joint venture between the Kerala government and the Union Ministry of Railways.



53. Desertification and Land Degradation Atlas of India:

- It has been published by Space Application Centre, ISRO, Ahmedabad.
- The Atlas provides state wise area of degraded lands for the time frame 2018-19.
- It was released on the occasion of **the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, observed on 17 June**.
- The theme for 2021 is "Restoration. Land. Recovery. We build back better with healthy land".

54. Indian Certification of Medical Devices (ICMED) Plus Scheme:

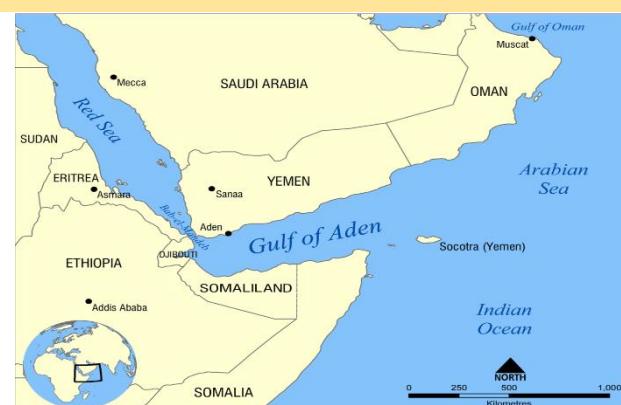
Launched by **Quality Council of India (QCI)**.

- This is an upgraded ICMED Scheme that was launched for Certification of Medical Devices in 2016.
- The ICMED 13485 PLUS, as the new scheme has been christened, will undertake verification of the quality, safety and efficacy of medical devices.

55. Gulf Of Aden:

Maiden Indian Navy - European Union Naval Force (EUNAVFOR) Exercise was held in **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.



56. Integrated Theatre Command:

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**.
- Integration and jointness of the three forces will avoid duplication of resources. The resources available under each service will be available to other services too.
- The **Shekatkar committee** has recommended the creation of 3 integrated theatre commands — northern for the China border, western for the Pakistan border, and southern for the maritime role.

Why in News?

A high-level committee consisting of representatives from the services and the Ministries concerned has been formed for wider consultations on the creation of integrated triservice theatre commands.

57. National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI):

It is a not-for-profit organization (section 8 of the Companies Act 2013) working since 2003 for spreading the internet infrastructure to the citizens of India through the following activities:

1. Internet Exchanges through which the internet data is exchanged amongst ISP's, Data Centers and CDNs.
2. .IN Registry, managing and operation of .IN country code domain and .भारत IDN domain for India.

58. Biotech-KISAN Programme:

1. It is a farmer-centric scheme for farmers, developed by and with farmers under the Department of Biotechnology, Ministry of Science and Technology.
2. It is a pan-India program, following a hub-and-spoke model and stimulates entrepreneurship and innovation in farmers and empowers women farmers.
3. It identifies and promotes local farm leadership in both genders. Such leadership helps to develop science-based farming besides facilitating the transfer of knowledge.

59. Ajit Mishra expert group:

- The Central Government has constituted an Expert Group under the Chairmanship of Professor Ajit Mishra, a renowned economist.
- Its mandate is **to provide technical inputs and recommendations on fixation of Minimum Wages and National Floor Wages to the Government.**

60. June 21 is observed as International Yoga Day:

- The UN proclaimed June 21 as International Day of Yoga by passing a resolution on December 11, 2014 during **the 69th session of the General Assembly**.
- **UN theme for yoga-2021:** "Yoga for well-being".
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) has also asked its member states to practice Yoga and has included it in its **Global Action Plan for physical activity 2018-30.**

61. "Jaan Hai To Jahaan Hai" Awareness Campaign:

Launched by the Ministry of Minority Affairs.

- It is a nationwide awareness campaign to create awareness on Corona vaccination in rural and remote areas of the country and also to "Crush and Curb" the rumours and apprehensions regarding the on-going vaccination drive.

62. Black Softshell Turtle:

1. It is a freshwater species.
2. **International Union for Conservation of Nature** had in 2021 listed the turtle as 'critically endangered'.
3. It does not enjoy legal protection under **the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act of 1972**.
4. Until sightings **along the Brahmaputra River's drainage in Assam**, the black softshell turtle was thought to be 'extinct in the wild' and confined only to ponds of temples in northeastern India and Bangladesh.



Why in News?

Hayagriva Madhava Temple Committee in Assam has signed a memorandum of understanding with two green NGOs, the Assam State Zoo cum Botanical Garden and the Kamrup district administration for long-term conservation of the rare freshwater black softshell turtle (*Nilssonia nigricans*).

63. Assam's Jorhat hosted special International Tea Day auction:

- **Jorhat**, the “tea capital” of **Assam** held the first International Tea Day special auction on June 21.
- The auction was conducted — exactly a month after the best leaves were plucked to mark **International Tea Day on May 21** — by mjunction services limited, India’s largest business-to-business e-commerce firm.

64. World's 1st GM rubber sapling:

- **World's first genetically modified (GM) rubber sapling** was recently planted at the Rubber Board's Sarutari research farm on the outskirts of Guwahati in **Assam**.
- It was developed at the Kerala-based Rubber Research Institute of India (RRI).
- With additional copies of **the gene MnSOD (manganese-containing superoxide dismutase)** inserted in it, the GM rubber is expected to tide over the severe cold conditions during winter, which is a major factor affecting the growth of rubber saplings.
- MnSOD gene used in the GM rubber was taken from the rubber plant itself.

65. 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.



66. Pygmy hogs:

Context:

- Eight pygmy hogs released in Manas National Park, Assam.
- They were released by **the Pygmy Hog Conservation Programme (PHCP)**.
- By 2025, the PHCP plans to release a target of 60 pygmy hogs in **Manas**- their home where their last original population still survives, albeit in declined numbers.



What is PHCP?

In 1995, Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Jersey, UK partnered with Forest Department, Government of Assam, IUCN, Wild Pig Specialist Group and Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India and formed PHCP which is being implemented with the PHCP's key partner Aaranyak and EcoSystems India.

About 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**.

67. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines:

- It is an island country in the Caribbean.

- It is located in the southeast Windward Islands of **the Lesser Antilles**, which lie in the West Indies at the southern end of the eastern border of the Caribbean Sea where the latter meets the Atlantic Ocean.

Why in News?

Cabinet approved the agreement between India and Saint Vincent and The Grenadines for the Exchange of Information and Assistance in Collection with respect to Taxes.

68. Black Sea:

- Black Sea** is an **inland sea** located between far-southeastern Europe and the far-western edges of the continent of Asia and the country of Turkey.
- Bordering Countries:** Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia, and Turkey.
- It connects to the Mediterranean Sea first through **the Bosphorus Strait**, then through **the Sea of Marmara and the Dardanelles Strait**, then south through **the Aegean Sea and the Sea of Crete**.
- The Black Sea is also connected to the Sea of Azov by the **Strait of Kerch**.



69. Poson:

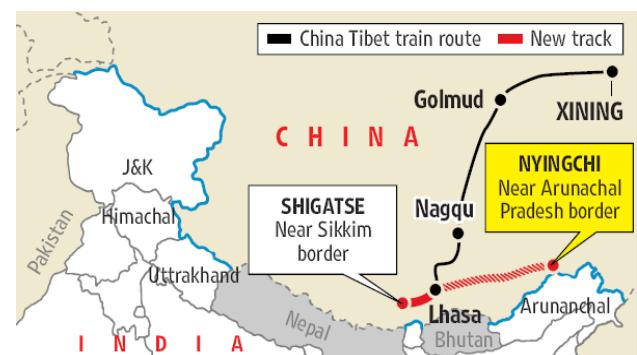
- Also known as Poson Poya, it is an annual festival held by Sri Lankan Buddhists celebrating **the arrival of Buddhism in Sri Lanka in the 3rd century BC**.
- The focal point of the religious festival is the Buddhist monastic complex on **the mountain of Mihintale**, where **Arahath Mahinda Thero** preached Buddhism to one of the kings of Sri Lanka.

70. Maritime State Development Council (MSDC):

- The MSDC is an apex advisory body for the development of the maritime sector and aims to ensure integrated development of Major and non-Major Ports.
- It was constituted in 1997** to assess in consultation with State Governments, the future development of existing and new Minor Ports by the respective Maritime States either directly or through captive users and private participation.
- The MSDC also monitors the development of minor ports, captive ports and private ports in the Maritime States.

71. China launches first bullet train in Tibet, close to Indian border:

- China has operationalised its **first fully electrified bullet train in the remote Himalayan region of Tibet**.
- It connects the provincial capital Lhasa and Nyingchi, a strategically located Tibetan border town close to Arunachal Pradesh.
- This line is a section of the **Sichuan-Tibet Railway**.
- The rail line crosses the **Brahmaputra river locally called Yarlung Zangbo** 16 times.



72. Project Seabird:

It is **the largest naval infrastructure project for India**.

- The project aims at creation of a naval base at Karwar on the west coast of India.

- Upon completion, the program will provide Indian Navy with its largest naval base on the west coast and also the largest naval base east of the Suez Canal.
- This would further bolster the operational readiness of the Armed Forces and help in augmenting trade, economy & humanitarian aid operations.

73. Dragon Man:

- Researchers from China have claimed to have found an ancient human skull that could belong to an **altogether new species of humans**.
- The skull was found in **north-east China's Harbin city**.
- It has been dubbed the "Dragon Man" or Homo longi, a name that has been derived from the **Long Jiang or Dragon river** in the Heilongjiang province of China where the city of Harbin is located.
- They could be over 146,000 years old.



74. Bengal monitor:

- The **Bengal monitor or common Indian monitor** (*Varanus bengalensis*) is a large lizard that is mainly terrestrial.
- The monitors are carnivorous and non-poisonous.
- The monitor lizard is protected under **Schedule I of WPA** but is regularly killed for its meat, blood and oil.
- The species is listed under the '**Least Concern**' category on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List.



75. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay:

- He was a Bengali poet and writer.
- He wrote the **national song Vande Mataram**.
- His novel **Anandamath** — which was set in the background of the **Sanyashi Bidroho** (rebellion of monks in late 18th century) — is considered to be one of key works on Bengal's nationalism.
- His first Bengali fiction is called '**Durgeshnondini**' published in 1865.
- He also wrote other famous novels like Kapalkundala in 1866, Mrinalini in 1869, Vishbriksha in 1873, Chandrasekhar in 1877, Rajani in 1877, Rajsimha in 1881 and Devi Chaudhurani in 1884.
- He brought out a monthly magazine called **Bangadarshan** in 1872.
- His **first fiction to appear in print was the English novel Rajmohan's Wife**.



76. Baihetan Dam:

- It is the world's second-biggest hydroelectric dam under construction in southwestern China.
- The dam is being constructed on **Jinsha river, a tributary of the Yangtze**.
- The 289-m-tall Baihetan Dam will have 16 generating units with a capacity of 1 million kilowatts each.

Three Gorges Dam, opened in 2003 on the Yangtze, is **the world's biggest hydroelectric dam**.



77. 2-DG oral drug:

- Dr Reddy's Laboratories has announced the commercial launch of drug 2-deoxy-D-glucose (2-DG).
- It is an anti-Covid drug developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- The drug is approved for emergency use as **an adjunct therapy** to the standard of care in the treatment of coronavirus patients in hospital settings.

How does it work?

- The 2DG drug comes in powder form in the sachet, which is taken orally by dissolving it in water. It accumulates in the virus-infected cells and prevents virus growth by stopping viral synthesis and energy production.

Impact: Its selective accumulation in virally infected cells makes this drug unique. The drug reportedly reduces a patient's average recovery time by two and a half days and oxygen demand by up to 40 per cent.

78. CoWIN:

- CoWIN is an extension of an electronic vaccine intelligence network, eVIN, which is used to collect real-time feedback of the vaccination programmes.
- It is a cloud-based IT solution for planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating COVID-19 vaccination in the country.

Why in News?

India will soon provide an open-source version of its CoWIN application to nearly 50 countries from Central Asia, Africa and Latin America that have indicated an interest in the technology.

79. Agni-P (Prime) missile:

- It is new-generation nuclear-capable ballistic missile.
- It was successfully test-fired by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- Agni-P is a new-generation advanced variant of Agni class of missiles. **It is a canisterised missile with range capability between 1,000 and 2,000 km.**
- Canisterisation** of missiles reduces the time required to launch the missile while improving its storage and mobility.

The longest of the Agni series, **Agni-V, an Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM)** with a range of more than 5,000 km, has already been tested several times and validated for induction.



80. Fukuoka Grand Prize:

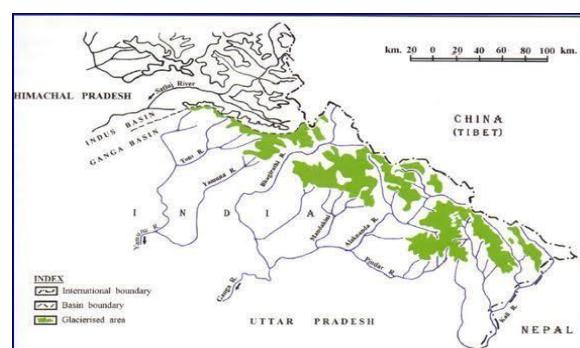
Noted journalist P. Sainath has been selected as one of the three recipients of the **Fukuoka Prize for 2021**.

Mr. Sainath will receive the '**Grand Prize**' of the Fukuoka Prize while the **Academic Prize and the Prize for Arts and Culture** will go to Kishimoto Mio of Japan and filmmaker Prabda Yoon of Thailand, respectively.

- The Fukuoka Prize** is given annually to distinguished people to foster and increase awareness of Asian cultures, and to create a broad framework of exchange and mutual learning among the Asian people.
- Eleven Indians have received the Fukuoka Prize so far.
- The prize was established in 1990.

81. Atlas of glacial lakes:

- Ministry of Jal Shakti** has released an updated atlas of glacial lakes that are part of the Ganga river basin.
- About 4,707 glacial lakes have been mapped in the Ganga basin.
- Glacial lakes with water spread area greater than 0.25 ha were mapped using **Resourcesat-2 Linear Imaging Self Scanning Sensor-IV satellite data**.
- The Atlas is available on **Bhuvan portal** of National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC), ISRO.



82. Kadaknath:

- Kadaknath or Kali Masi** is a breed of chicken originating from the Jhabua and Dhar districts of western Madhya Pradesh.

- It received GI tag in 2017.
- It is popular for its black meat which is famous for its meat quality, texture, taste, and excellent medicinal values.
- It is also famous for its low cholesterol and high protein content.



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